PERSIMMONS

Aunt Polly *and* Other Stories

ILLUSTRATED

By
A. C. BUTLER,

Revised Edition

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Fannie Louise Pol

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PERSIMMONS

AUNT POLLY

and Other Stories for Boys and Girls, and Men and Women who have not forgotten their school days.

By

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Revised Edition

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INTRODUCTION.

"Please tell us a story." This is the appeal that comes from the hearts and voices of children everywhere and always. The appeal is natural. The value of the story in the intellectual and moral education of children is fully recognized. A large part of the school readers consists of stories. To be a successful teacher one must understand the value of the story.

No gift possessed by a public speaker counts more in his favor, or contributes more to his success, than the ability to tell a good story and to tell it well. It is only the nature that has become crisped and shriveled or soured by the experiences of life that no longer appreciates a good story, and unless it be a good song, there is no better antidote for shriveling, crisping and souring than a good story.

Teachers and parents all fully agree that the value of good stories in the way of inculcating moral truth is paralleled only by their scarcity.

To put in permanent form for use in the home and school, the following stories, is the purpose of this little book. The stories are not new, nor yet old. They have all appeared in The School News, hence they have been tested and their merits fully proven. That they may serve to entertain, to instruct and to inspire in boys and girls a spirit of kindliness, of charity, of patriotism, and a love for all that is beautiful and good, is the sincere wish of the author.

PERSIMMONS

"Is it a truly true story?" This is the first question that most boys and girls will ask about "Persimmons." Let me assure you, my young friends, that Persimmons is a real character. Carl Brown and the other characters are real characters. The center piece of each chapter is actual experience; only the fringe or border of each is fiction.

CHAPTER I.

Everything that grows must pass through a stage of greenness. Some growing things are greener than others, and some remain green longer than others. Boys and girls are not exceptions to this law, or habit of nature. Some trees are called evergreens because they remain green as long as they live. For a similar reason some people might very properly be called evergreens. In his youth, Persimmons promised to be one of this sort. It may have been in consequence of his greenness that he was called Persimmons, or it may have been because he was so tall, lank and slender, or possibly in consequence of a peculiar habit which possessed him of drawing his mouth into an odd pucker when he was embarrassed, that he was nicknamed Persimmons.

The teacher called him Benjamin, his sisters called him Ben, his mother called him Bennie, but everybody else called him Persimmons. His mother was a widow

and he the oldest of a family of seven—two sons and five daughters. They came from the South soon after the close of the war. They were poor but had seen better days. Ben was fifteen years of age at the time our story begins. Any one desirous to know the ages of the other children may find them by counting backward by twos down to three, the age of a weazen-faced little cripple named Hez. They lived in a tenant house on the farm of Deacon Brown.

School began at Hickory Hollow the first Monday in October. This, however, was a matter of little concern to Ben, for he had left school the year before early in the term, declaring he would not go to school any more. It was not his dislike for school that caused him to leave, but because he could not bear to be tantalized, taunted, and picked at by the whole school. It was not that they disliked him that they treated him so, for he was so good-natured that they could not help liking him. It was simply his misfortune to be the *one* boy in school toward whom all the jokes and "sells" of the school were directed. Carl Brown was the leading tormentor. Carl would make such remarks as "Persimmons are getting ripe now," "I understand Persimmons is going to start a whistling school," "Have you harvested your gourds yet, Persimmons?" The other scholars would all laugh and Ben would pucker his mouth.

I think it is the pig element in human nature that causes all the members of a company or school to make one of their number the target for all the cheap wit and chaffing jests of the rest. I have more than once observed all the pigs in a lot turn against one because of some deformity or eccentricity of that particular pig and ren-

der its life miserable by nosing it around, biting at it, and chasing it around the lot. It was only the other day that I was compelled to remove a young rooster from my chicken yard because the rest of the fowls pecked at him until his chicken life became a burden to him. True, he was an awkward, ungainly fowl, and what few feathers he had were speckled. Perhaps in barn yard etiquette this was sufficient cause for banishment from chicken society.

One rainy day at recess Ben was eating an apple. When he had nearly finished it, Carl Brown struck his hand an upward blow which caused the piece of apple to be hurled across the room and to strike Miss Anderson, the teacher, in the face. School was called and Miss A. demanded an explanation. Carl Brown arose to explain, and Ben and everybody else in the room supposed he would tell the truth, but instead, he stated that he saw Ben attempt to throw the apple core out at the door, but he was so awkward that he missed the door and struck the teacher. This seemed so ludicrous that it convulsed the school with laughter.

The teacher asked Ben if he had anything to say. Ben arose and made a straightforward, truthful statement of the case; but as Carl was the son of Deacon Brown, the wealthiest man in the district and the leading member of the school board, the matter was dismissed as unworthy of notice. As every teacher of experience knows, there are days at school when everything goes wrong. Rainy days, and cloudy, gloomy days are likely to be days of this sort. I think an appropriate name for such days would be "devil days." This particular day was a devil day at the Hickory Hollow school.

Ed Duncan was the worst boy in school. Miss Anderson had changed Ed's seat two or three times during the afternoon for bad behavior. She finally placed him in the seat with Ben, who was always quiet and studious, reprimanding him quite severely as she did so. Ed was an impudent boy and retorted in a perplexing manner. Miss A. yielded to the impulse to slap him in the face. Let me say just here, by way of advice to teachers, that I think Miss Anderson did wrong. I have always advised teachers associated with me not to slap or strike pupils about the head, even for impudence, but I have always pardoned them when they failed to heed the advice. The truth is, as I believe, there is an instinct in a woman's hand which impels her to slap a child for impudence. It was the ready antidote for impudence of our mothers, grandmothers, and great-grandmothers. Without doubt, Mother Eve slapped Cain in the face for impudence a goodly number of times.

Ed was an active boy, and quick as a weasel he dodged the blow and the broad palm of the teacher's hand fell square on Ben's homely, innocent cheek just as he had finished the word "biscuit" in studying his spelling lesson. An uproar of laughter followed the accident. The teacher bit her lips and Ben puckered his. At last the day which had been so full of misfortunes was near its close. The spelling class was called. The class was so long that it reached from the teacher's desk around three sides of the room.

Ben was foot. He was always foot in the spelling class, though among the first in arithmetic, geography, and history. By a slip of the tongue the little girl at the head of the class missed the word "biscuit." The fact that she,

"I JUST HAPPENED TO SPELL IT.'

the best speller in school, missed it, seemed to stampede the class. One after another tried and failed, till only Ben was left—big, awkward Ben; I can see him now as he stood three feet away from Ed Duncan (who was Ben's rival for the "foot station"), his feet well apart, his pants inside his cowhide boots, and his hands in his pockets. B-i-s-c-u-i-t fell from his tongue as if the letters had been oiled. After the confusion had subsided, the teacher beckoned Ben to take his place at the head. He refused, saying "I just happened to spell it." The teacher told him rather abruptly to take his place at the head. He shuffled along awkwardly up the long line, and when he was opposite Carl Brown, that incessant persecutor slipped out his foot and tripped him. Ben fell sprawling to the floor, but sprang to his feet an instant after and struck Carl a blow which sent him reeling against the wall.

There was no danger of Carl's striking back. He was too cowardly. Bullies are usually great cowards. Miss Anderson dismissed the class and gave them all a round scolding, the innocent with the guilty. She said the climax of disorder had been reached and that she should call in the directors the next morning for an investigation, and somebody might be prepared to be expelled from school. But the next morning the sun was shining, Ben's seat was vacant, Ed Duncan had gone hunting, Carl Brown had the toothache, and the directors did not call. What a blessed thing it is for us all that the sun rises on the opposite side of the world from where we saw him last, and that with his reappearing he so frequently brings a turning round in the condition of things.

Ben related all the facts to his mother, and finished by saying, "It is of no use, mother; I may as well quit

school. The boys are all against me for some reason, and the teacher does not seem to care how much they torment me and snub me."

"But, Bennie," argued his mother, "I would not mind it. You do not care if they do laugh at you; that will not hurt you."

"But mother, I do care," said Ben. "It is not human not to care," his voice trembling with emotion. "I may as well quit."

Mrs. D. with some difficulty persuaded Ben to go with her that evening over to the Deacon's to talk the matter over with him.

Lank Deacon Brown and fleshy Mrs. Brown laughed heartily at the recital of Ben's ups and downs at school. Mrs. D. could not refrain from laughing a little, but Ben sat looking out at the window, a picture of discouragement. The Deacon finally remarked, "I told the other directors we ought to hire a man teacher for the winter. A woman can't do nawthin' with them boys." The Deacon's family did not like Miss Anderson. The teacher had always boarded at the Deacon's but Miss A. had secured another boarding place, and this in a great measure accounted for her inefficiency. The Deacon advised Ben not to go to school any more, and said to him in a consoling voice that if he would come and help Joe, the hired man, during the winter, he would pay him two dollars per week. The proposition was accepted and Ben felt that his school days were at an end.

CHAPTER II.

But one year's time frequently works marvelous changes in human affairs. A new teacher had been employed at Hickory Hollow—a young man who had completed two years at the State Normal school and who had taught very successfully in an adjoining district, and although it was the universal desire of the parents and children that he should remain, the leading director, who was a very wealthy man, but who had no children to educate, said they could not afford to pay so much, so he accepted the better wages and came to Hickory Hollow.

Carl Brown had not yet started to school, intending, as he said, to go to business college after Christmas. Ben's three sisters had started and had wonderful things to tell each evening about the new teacher and the events of the day at school.

Sometimes after supper they would take leaves of paper and fold and tear them into pieces of the same shape and size and show with them how the teacher explained fractions. Again, they would run a knitting needle through an apple and talk about the motions of the earth, day and night, and the seasons. They had much to say about the experiments the teacher performed and the curious things he had told the children about frogs, insects, worms, and other things which he had caught and brought in for the general exercise. All this furnished Ben something to think about during the long days while he worked alone in the field or helped Deacon Brown's hired man, Darkie Joe.

Friday evening was the best of all at the Widow D.'s fireside. After the spelling down on Friday afternoon at school, the teacher always told the children a capital story and sang one or two songs for them. Thus Ben was kept in touch with the life and spirit of the school.

About the middle of November the teacher organized a reading club for the older boys and girls, and although Hannah D. was only thirteen, she was one of the big girls, and hence a member of the club. The second Friday evening after the club was organized the meeting was held at Mrs. D.'s house. They had selected Irving's Sketch-Book as the first book to read, and on the evening named they read "Westminster Abbey." The teacher drew a diagram of the abbey and explained all about it. He told them some funny stories about Queen Elizabeth and some pathetic incidents in the life of Mary, Queen of Scots. Ben sat back in the corner of the room, too bashful to join the company around the table, but his mind was buried as deeply in the story as his hands were in his pockets.

Mr. White made several pleasant remarks to Ben during the evening. Ben puckered his lips when Mr. White remarked that he wished he had him in school. "I will tell you why, for one reason," said Mr. White. "We have organized a baseball club and there are seven good sized boys in school. I make the eighth, but we need another one." Ben did not know much about base ball, but thought he would like to learn. The club had arranged to meet at the schoolhouse the next afternoon for a game. With his mother's consent Ben agreed to go. The afternoon was fine and they had a "jolly good time," as the boys expressed it.

Mr. White walked home with Ben after the game,

and they stopped at the gate and talked quite a while. When Ben came in he told his mother that he had about decided to start to school the following Monday. This pleased Mrs. D. very much, for she had been not a little worried about Bennie's schooling. The matter was talked over at the supper table. The fall work was about completed. The rent corn had been gathered and hauled to Deacon Brown's. The widow's share had been cut and piled into shocks securely tied, the apples had been gathered, the potatoes dug, and the straw shed repaired for the cows.

As for fuel, there was plenty of that in the wood lot adjoining the house. Bennie could do the chores nights and mornings, so there seemed to be no reason why he might not start to school.

"If Pete Small would only pay me the two dollars he owes me," said Ben, "it would go a good way toward buying the books I shall need."

"Yes," said his mother reflectively, "but I guess he intends never to pay it." Ben had helped Pete Small two days during threshing time more than a year before. Pete required him to work on the straw stack right at the tail of the machine, where the dust and chaff at times nearly strangled him, and where the straw came so fast that at times it completely buried him.

As the wheat was bearded, Ben felt at night as though a thousand pins were sticking him, or a thousand mosquitoes were biting him all at once. When the threshing was done, Pete told Ben that as he did only a boy's work he could not allow him full pay. Ben thought he had earned three dollars, but was willing to compromise for two. Pete said he would hand it to him some time. Ben

had asked him for it twice, and Mrs. D. had spoken to him about it twice, but Pete had said each time that he did not have it "by him, but would hand it to the boy some time."

Just as the plans were completed for Ben to start to school a rap was heard at the door. The caller was Deacon Brown, who had come over to have a talk with Mrs. D. about business matters. The chief matter of business was to employ Ben to work for him during the winter months. Mrs. D. told the Deacon that Bennie had decided to go to school, and that she much preferred to have him do so. At this the Deacon seemed considerably annoyed and took occasion to remind the widow that she was still behind with her payment for the team she had bought from him, and if she was really as anxious to pay for it as she had appeared to be, she would be glad to let Ben come and work for him. "I will allow him ten dollars a month, which for short days and light work is mighty big pay," said the Deacon. Hannah had worked for Mrs. Brown all summer at one dollar per week, but had quit when school began, which the Deacon thought was very foolish, indeed.

The Deacon remarked to himself as he walked towards home, "I do not see what on earth that great gawky 'Jack-in-the-box' wants to go to school for."

After the Deacon left, Mrs. D. and Ben talked over the matter of their indebtedness, which seemed to be worrying the Deacon. Ben got his pass-book and counted up the days, half days, and pieces of days that he had worked for the Deacon during the spring and summer, and, although there had been no agreement about the wages for this extra work, it was taken for granted that the Deacon would be willing to allow reasonable pay for it.

In this, however, Ben and his mother found out afterward that they were mistaken. When Mrs. D. sold her poultry at Thanksgiving time, she had money enough, with the footing of Ben's pass-book, to pay the balance due on the team.

The Deacon accepted the twelve dollars in money, but seemed amazed to think that Ben expected anything for his work. He said he knew that the boy had "pottered around with Joe some, but the last thing he expected was that he would bring in a bill for it." The fact was that the "pottering around" amounted to forty-six good farmer days of fourteen hours each, and fifty cents a day, since Ben boarded at home, was not unreasonable; still the Deacon refused to credit the twenty-three dollars on the widow's indebtedness, hence there was a disagreement.

Let me say just here to my boy and girl readers that this disagreement arose from the failure to have a fair understanding at the outset. If Ben had insisted on an agreement early in the spring and made a memorandum of it in his pass-book and had the Deacon sign it, there would have been no trouble. If people generally would adopt the simple rule of writing down the terms and conditions of business dealings instead of trusting to "We'll make it right," there would be fewer lawsuits, fewer losses, and fewer enemies in the world.

Ben started to school on Monday after Thanksgiving, and to his surprise, and I may say discouragement, Carl Brown started the same day. It had been Ben's understanding that Carl would go to business college, and this was a source of consolation to him. But Carl had changed his mind, and it came about in this way: Mrs. Brown had invited Mr. White, the teacher, to dinner on Thanks-

giving day. Her daughter Maggie was home from the seminary, and it would be delightful, she thought, for Maggie to meet a young man of Mr. White's intelligence and refined manner. Then, too, he sang such a lovely tenor, while Carl's bass was promising. This, with Maggie's superb soprano and Mrs. B.'s own neglected alto, made the afternoon one of the most delightful that the Brown residence had enjoyed for a long time.

This was all very nice and no one objected, so far as I know, except Dick Snyder, a young bumpkin who had been a perennial schoolboy beau of Maggie's. Mr. White's interest in young people, particularly in boys who have reached the stagnant period in school life, led him to have a prolonged conversation with Carl, which resulted in Carl's deciding to spend one more winter at Hickory Hollow before starting to the Buzztown Business College and Commercial Institute, presided over by Professors Gauzy and Tinsel.

Mrs. Brown was highly pleased at this. It would seem so lonely and vacant like for Carl and Maggie both to be away from home. Then, too, Mr. White seemed so intelligent, so well educated, and capable. I need not say it pleased the Deacon, for, to use his own phraseology, he "didn't take no stock in Carl's going to business college, nohow."

I have spoken of the stagnant period. Will parents and teachers give me their attention a moment? We have all seen a little brook starting from its birthplace among the hills to go laughing, skipping, and bubbling along, drinking in sunshine and pure oxygen from above, and absorbing gritty chemicals from the rocks below, promising nothing but a brilliant career through the landscape.

We have seen it reach a marshy or boggy place through which it oozed with perplexing slowness, becoming stagnant and sometimes filthy and scummy.

We have seen it emerge from this swampy region and move along in a devious, uncertain sort of channel, sometimes beautiful, sometimes repulsive, but always more or less disappointing, till the more stately river was reached. Such, as my experience verifies, is a profile of the evolution or education of the average boy. His first few years of school are cheery and full of interest, his mind is receptive, he learns readily, and, with chance exceptions, is easily managed. By and by he comes to a marshy pool through which he must choke his way. He loses interest in school work, chafes under restraint, and the chances are he is a nuisance to his teacher, his parents, and himself, so far as school is concerned.

If he could only be put to work for a year or two, to learn a trade or something that would develop muscle and character, such as the school cannot give! Manual training in the schools seeks to help the boy cut a channel through his stagnant period, but manual training for some reason seems at present to be unattainable by most schools. In the meantime the problem of what to do with stagnant boys remains unsolved. Happy is the condition of those boys in their middle teens who are provided with manual toil of some sort outside of school.

Ben had just emerged from his year of stagnation and he took hold of his studies with wonderful interest. Carl Brown was still stagnant, and seemed destined to remain so for some time to come. True, his father could have put him to work on the farm, but Carl and Mrs. Brown had other notions. Then, too, Carl had a horse,

a road cart, and roller skates. It was before the day of bicycles and automobiles.

CHAPTER III.

As indicated in the preceding chapter, Mr. White gave twenty minutes each day to "Nature Study." The woods, hills, valleys, and brooks about Hickory Hollow were overflowing with rich forms of animal and vegetable life. Mr. White was the fortunate possessor of a good microscope, through which new and wonderful worlds were opened up to those of his pupils who had souls in harmony with nature. Ben in particular was charmed with this part of the work, and frequently remained an hour after school to learn more.

Thus it happened that he and the teacher frequently walked home together. Mr. White loaned Ben some books to read. The reading club continued to grow in interest, and Ben was happy *only*—. Boys and girls, did you ever think how perfectly splendid, as your sister says, things would be if it were not for the *only* which seemed to be tacked on to everything? You remember the evening of the party was delightful, *only!* The time you went nutting was a blissful time, *only!* Your Thanksgiving dinner was all you could possibly have wished, *only!* How hard it is for us to learn that half our *onlies* are blessings in disguise, and the other half either misfortunes or the results of bad management.

It seemed to Ben that his *onlies* consisted of at least two large ones and several small ones. In the first place they were poor and he felt at times that he ought not to go to school, but that he should have accepted the Deacon's

offer to work for him, notwithstanding his mother had thought differently. In the second place, the boys and girls snubbed him, laughed at him, and tantalized him. Mr. White had observed this and had talked with Ben about it, advising him not to notice it or to care for it. Advice, like medicine, is so much easier to give than to take.

After Carl Brown's first little spurt of interest in his studies had subsided, and the newness of school under Mr. White's management had worn off a little, he began his old tricks again. First, he pinned the blackboard cloth to Ben's coat-tail. The boys and girls all laughed, though it would not have been funny anywhere else except in school. The teacher removed the rag and took a few minutes to talk about the silliness of such pranks. He told them, among other things, that it did not require much intelligence to do such things, even remarking that a fool or an idiot would know enough to pin a rag to somebody's coat.

You may think it strange, but Carl took offense at this. He supposed that Mr. White knew he did it and took this sly way of calling him an idiot or a fool. He told the boys at recess that "Persimmons' " old coat was too short and he wanted to piece it out, and at the same time he said some disrespectful things of Mr. White. He also confided to his mother his feelings about Mr. White's remarks. That aristocratic individual was piqued at the "thrust," as she called it, and thought Mr. White was a good teacher, but a little too hot-headed.

Some days after this there was a great commotion among the boys one afternoon at recess. There had been a case of "tar-and-feathering" in the neighborhood a few

BEN ASTRIDE OF A RAIL.

nights before. Thanks to the advancement of civilization, through the influence of the public schools, but few of my young friends know what that means. Ask your fathers and mothers to tell you about it. The teacher looked out and saw Ben astride of a rail, two boys supporting either end and several others holding him in place while they gave him a free ride in imitation of the "tar-and-feathering." It was easy to see that Carl was the ringleader in this fracas.

When school was called, Mr. White said nothing about the affair, but began the regular school work. He had made one talk about such things, and he did not believe in dealing too much in generalities. He had seen enough to spot the guilty parties. Carl, Ed Duncan, and two or three others were gleeful during the rest of the day. Ben worked away at his arithmetic, but the teacher noticed tears in his eyes several times. At the dismissal of school Mr. White asked Carl and his "gang" to remain a few minutes. He said to them, "Boys, we had as well talk plain about this matter. I have observed for some time that Benjamin has to put up with a great deal of taunting, tantalizing, and sometimes abuse from you fellows. If he looked upon it as a joke, it would be different; but he is very sensitive and feels deeply hurt at his treatment.

"Suppose you put yourself in his place for a moment. Let him and all the rest of the boys turn against you, call you names, and torment you as you do him. Put yourself on that rail this afternoon, and in your mind let all the other boys deride you. Think about it." He waited two or three minutes for them to think and then handed each a slip of paper, remarking as he did so, "Now, I want

you to write down just what you think. Remember you have put yourself in Ben's place and are writing as though you were Ben. Be honest and truthful, and if you have any pledge for the future that you desire to make, I shall be glad to have it, but I shall accept whatever you write."

The letters were curiosities. Some of them were very good and showed the right spirit, ending with a promise to "let up," as more than one boy expressed it. There was one, however, which differed from the rest. It ran as follows:

"If I could not take a joak I would go and soak my head, and if I was as big a baby as percimens, run and tell my mother everything, and the teacher was as awkward and green as percimens, I would see if I could get a job of work and pay my deats, but if it breaks his heart I guess I can let the big chease alone. Carl Brown."

Mr. White did not notice that Ben took all his books with him when he left that evening, but when Mrs. D. called him as he passed her house on the way to his boarding place he found that such was the case, and that Ben did not think he would go back to school. Mr. White laid his hand on Ben's shoulder and said, "Ben, my boy, this will not do; you must not think of quitting. I have taken steps to stop this foolishness and meanness. You are doing excellent work, and I want to tell you that you have a superior mind. In some respects I have rarely seen its equal. You are laying a good foundation in science, mathematics, and literature, and, my word for it, you will make your mark some day if you hold on to school. Besides, there is a principle of right and justice at stake."

Mrs. D. wiped her eyes with her apron and remarked that Bennie was delighted with his school work, but there seemed to be so many things in the way that she sometimes feared he would not go to school as long as he ought. She referred to the offer he had to earn wages during the winter, and remarked that they were so needy that Bennie felt as though he ought to be at work. "I try to encourage him," said she. "I tell him we still have plenty to eat and something to wear. The girls will soon be strong enough to help, and we will get along some way."

"I see," remarked Mr. White; "but let me tell you that some of the greatest and best men have had to contend against just such difficulties. The fact is, the overcoming of obstacles has in it something which results in the development of strong character. It is not the boys and girls who have good opportunities, with all obstacles removed and everything favorable, that make the successful men and women. As a rule, it is those who have been buffeted by fate or misfortune that make the successful, trustworthy, and, as we say, level-headed men and women."

Ben felt greatly encouraged by Mr. White's remarks and promised to return to school the next morning. The boys were all much kinder to him than they had been. Even Carl Brown kept his promise to let him alone for nearly a week. Ben entered upon his studies with renewed zeal. It will break some teacher's heart to hear it, but Mr. White excused him from spelling—that is as a class exercise. The misspelled words in his journal about the study of nature were marked, and he looked up the correct spelling in the dictionary, and in this way he improved greatly in spelling.

The schoolhouse at Hickory Hollow had been one of

the old-time log structures, but had been modernized—that is to say, it had been weatherboarded outside and plastered inside, windows had displaced the greased paper that our grandfathers tell us about, the fireplace had been closed up and a stove substituted. Mr. White was hampered somewhat, as many country teachers are, by lack of school furniture and apparatus. He had improvised blackboards by purchasing slated paper and gluing it to the wall. One little patch he placed above the old mantlepiece, and when the arithmetic class worked at the board this patch was assigned to Ben, because he was tall and could reach it readily.

In the modernizing process the space occupied by the old hearth had been covered over with wide boards. As far as Mr. White had observed, they were safe and secure. Ben had stood on them and worked at the little blackboard day after day, but one Monday morning as he took his place, one end of the board on which he stepped tipped upward and he went down into the pit below, a distance of three or four feet. The school was startled and thrown into confusion, but nobody laughed except Carl Brown and Ed Duncan. Aside from a sprained ankle, which caused him to limp for several days, Ben was not much hurt.

Mr. White was angry, but he made no threats nor inquiries. He helped Ben out, brushed the dust from his clothes, and went on with the recitation. He made a careful inspection after school and found that the board had been pried up, the nails broken off, and the board so arranged that by slightly moving it a trap would be formed. He discovered, too, that a small portion of the end of the board had been sawed off. While inspecting the trap, his

eye caught sight of something on the ground below. This proved to be a lead pencil—a new one, with the letters E. D. cut in the wood. "Some circumstantial evidence," thought Mr. White. A few days afterward he had an opportunity to interview Ed Duncan privately.

He showed him the pencil and asked if it were his. Ed replied that it was and that he had lost it some days before. Mr. White told him where he found it, at which Ed first turned pale, then scarlet, but he tried to look composed and said he supposed it must have dropped through a crack in the floor. But an investigation showed this to be impossible. He then suddenly remembered that he had loaned it to some one on Monday before; he could not remember exactly to whom, but he thought it was Ben D.

"Oh, what a tangled web we weave,
When first we practice to deceive."

Mr. White told Ed there was no use dodging; he might as well make a clean breast of the matter and tell all he knew about the loosened board. Ed prevaricated till Mr. White explained to him what the lawyers call state's evidence. Being assured by Mr. White that he might, by telling a straight story, free himself from punishment, Ed proceeded to tell how Dick Snyder, Carl Brown, and himself were in the schoolhouse on Sunday evening, and how Carl said he would like to play some trick on Persimmons, "for then," said Carl, "he will quit school and go to work for the old governor, and I will not have to get up at five in the morning and curry the horses and milk the cows. If there is anything I hate it is currying horses and milking cows. Besides, just think of being

routed out at five o'clock these cold mornings when a fellow is dead for sleep."

"So, while we were talking about it," continued Ed, "we hit on a plan to fix the board and let him fall through the floor. Carl went home and got a saw and hatchet and he and Dick fixed it. I didn't have much to do with it."

"I am much obliged to you, Ed," said Mr. White. "I think you have told the truth." Mr. White then had a frank, friendly talk with Ed about such trickery and meanness. The better surface of Ed's nature was uppermost and he seemed to profit by the conversation.

CHAPTER IV.

Mr. White detained Carl after school the next day, and after stating to him that he was at the bottom of the trap-door knavery, and that, from what he had learned in various ways, he was well satisfied that the purpose was to drive Ben away from school. Carl denied knowing about the affair, but his countenance betrayed him. The teacher had provided a few good elm sprouts which grew plentifully about Hickory Hollow. He took one of these from its place of concealment and, as a prelude, he closed his eyes and said:

"Oh, Lord, I am going to whip this boy. Thou knowest I want to do right. I want to do my duty. I pray that this punishment may help him to come to himself. Amen."

He then proceeded to deal with Carl as Solomon is said to have advised. Now, I give it as the result of my experience, reaching back a quarter of a century, that

nine boys out of ten would have viewed the matter right; would have considered the account square and said nothing to anybody about it. But Carl was the one boy in ten upon whom the punishment had an opposite effect. He hurried home, went in limping, and told his mother what had happened. A hurried examination showed the marks. Yes, there were the marks on back and limbs. Mrs. Brown felt that Carl had been shamefully abused and that the family name had been disgraced. She called Mr. Brown to see the marks.

The Deacon looked at them somewhat unconcernedly, but before agreeing to call a meeting of the directors to discharge the teacher, as Mrs. B. declared he must do, he said he would have to hear both sides of the story and know more about the facts before making up his mind what to do. I will not detail the conversation that followed between Mr. and Mrs. Brown. It was a family matter and none of our business. A few minutes later Mrs. Brown, having hurriedly harnessed old "Bet" to the buggy, was on her way to Mr. White's boarding place. Carl did not feel able to go, he said. Mrs. B. drove fast, "Nursing her wrath to keep it warm." The teacher had just reached the door of his boarding place when Mrs. B. drove up and called to him.

"I want to know," she began, as she reached the gate, "what on earth my boy has been doing that you have given him such an unmerciful beating." Mr. White did not answer. Mrs. B. did not expect him to answer. In fact, she did not give him time to answer, but began a tirade of vituperation, to which Mr. White listened patiently. When she had finished her verbal dissection of the young man he remarked, quietly: "Mrs. Brown, if you will permit

me, I wish to say that I did what I considered to be my duty. I honestly think I did right. I did not punish Carl severely, much less brutally, but I punished him justly. I have no ill will toward him whatever. I should be glad to have him continue in school and shall do all I can to help him in his studies."

Then glancing toward the horse he said, "Excuse me, I see your hitch-rein is dragging; allow me to fix it for you," which he did nicely. Mrs. B. now delivered the second volume of talk, which was much more reasonable than the first. She knew that Carl was very trying at times. He tried her patience sorely, she said, but that she usually could conquer him by kindness. "He is a Brown," she continued, "and the Browns are all stubborn. You cannot drive them, but you can lead them." Her voice and manner softened down toward the last, and, boys and girls, you would hardly believe it, but my pen for it, she actually bade Mr. White a pleasant good evening and invited him to "call and see them some time."

Carl did not return to school that winter. Foiled in his purpose of hectoring Ben into leaving school to work for his father, and being convinced that Mr. White would not tolerate his pranks, there was nothing left for him to attend school for. This was no loss to the school. Ben made good use of the time and soon stood at the head of all the classes except in spelling, from which, it will be remembered, he had been excused. He had to quit early in the spring to go to work on the farm, but he kept up a course of reading; and, as Mr. White was employed again for the following term, Ben made arrangements to start to school early in the fall.

I say made arrangements; this was by no means easy.

Carl Brown started to business college early in September, and the Deacon insisted more than ever upon Ben's working for him during the fall and winter. It was finally agreed that Ben should work mornings and evenings. He tried to have a fair understanding with the Deacon as to his duties and wages. He wrote down a list of the things he was expected to do each morning and evening. In a shop, a store, or a railroad office such a list can be made and followed with little variation, but on a farm it is altogether different.

True, there are certain things that must be done every morning and evening, but certain other things come up unexpectedly that somebody must do. To illustrate from Ben's experience: Guinea, the old black cow, would be found one evening away over in Pete Small's cornfield, another in Jones' wood pasture. In the winter the water in the well at the barn became low, and it was necessary to cut holes through the ice in the creek to supply water for the cattle. Again, during a snow storm the sheep all ran away, and it took Ben and the Deacon two days to find them.

Ben arose at 4 o'clock in the morning, the sleepiest of all hours for a young and growing boy. He depended upon his mother to awaken him, which she did by thumping with the end of the broom handle on the floor of his sleeping room, which was immediately above hers, with only the floor of rough boards between. It would seem to Ben that he had just dropped to sleep when thump, thump, thump, would go the broomstick. He would get up, light his lantern, go over to the Deacon's barn, and, when there were no extra jobs, complete his work and get home to breakfast by six. He would attend to his own

chores after breakfast and then go to school. Sometimes extra work and bad weather delayed him so that he would be late, but Mr. White understood the reason and excused him. Some of the other boys, who had little else to do but to go to school, and were required to make up lost time when they were tardy, thought it was not fair for the teacher to excuse Ben.

Ben took more interest than ever in the reading club. During the fall and winter the club read Longfellow's Evangeline, Whittier's Snow Bound, Scott's Lady of the Lake, Emerson's Compensation and Self-reliance and Shakespeare's Merchant of Venice. Ben committed to memory a large number of the most beautiful passages. Crossing the meadow in the frosty star-light mornings, there would come to his mind and repeat themselves such passages as—

"One by one in the infinite meadows of heaven blossomed the lovely stars, the forget-me-nots of the angels."

He sometimes felt that his lot was a pretty hard one, but he felt greatly encouraged. Carl Brown was gone, and the boys and girls no longer tormented him; on the contrary, they would gather around him at recess and noon time to have him explain for them knotty problems in arithmetic.

During the holidays, one evening Ben and his mother were talking over ways and means of making ends meet. Reference was made to the money that Pete Small still owed Ben and the twenty-three dollars that the Deacon refused to allow. Ben decided to go over to Pete Small's that evening and ask him once more for the money. He found Small at home, but he was glum and surly. He claimed that he had paid the claim long ago. "Besides,"

said he, "that old black cow of Brown's has destroyed ten times as much for me as that little work would amount to, and you may tell him that I say somebody will have to make it good."

Ben felt indignant at this and wished that he might find some way to get even with Small. As he started home the moon was shining bright, there was a light snow on the ground, it was not very cold, and he thought he would go home across the fields. He accordingly started down the ravine back of Small's house. Near the foot of the ravine he heard a noise like that of a rattling chain. He went to the spot and found some sort of animal fast in a trap. He at first thought it was a rat, but it was too large—a muskrat, possibly, or a squirrel. "No," thought he, "squirrels are too domestic to prowl about at night. They are always snug in bed by dark." Close inspection proved it to be a *mink.*

My girl readers would have been afraid of it. I wonder how many of my boy readers would have done as Ben did. He looked at the imprisoned animal awhile as if debating something in his mind, then said to himself, "Yes, it is all right. It would not be right to take the trap; that would be stealing, but minks belong to anybody. A good mink skin is worth three or four dollars, but then it is worth something to skin a mink. It will just about pay me what Pete Small owes me." As he finished this soliloquy he took a stick and struck the animal a few sharp blows on the head and killed it. He then carefully reset the trap and went home. He put the mink in a safe place under the cow-shed and went into the house.

The family had retired. Mrs. D. told Ben that Mr. White had called in the evening and that he and the girls

HE PLACED THE ANIMAL IN THE TRAP.

had been popping corn and eating apples and pie and had left some for him. Ben sat down by the kitchen fire, munched an apple or two, and ate two generous pieces of mince pie that had, apparently, been left for him, rehearsing in the meantime his conversation with Small and the events of his fruitless trip. He did not tell his mother about the mink, but as his mind dwelt upon it he remarked, "But I think it will come out all right, mother. Emerson says in his Compensation that persons and events may stand for a time between you and justice, but it is only a postponement. He says the swindler swindles himself. The thief steals from himself." "That last," thought Ben, "hits me pretty hard, but then I have not stolen anything. I have only taken what belongs to me." He retired, and in a short time he was fast asleep.

He dreamed that he was walking down a ravine, when suddenly a huge trap was sprung and he was caught by the foot. He struggled to free himself, but could not. Soon he saw Pete Small and a squad of men coming toward him with clubs and guns. One of them had a rope, at one end of which he began to make a noose, preparatory to placing it around Ben's neck! This so terrified him that, to free himself, he gave a convulsive jump all over, which awakened him. He found his heart beating very fast and his body covered with perspiration.

Now, boys and girls, whether it was the guilty conscience or the guilty mince pie that caused him to dream this horrible dream, is a question we must leave for physiology and moral philosophy to settle, while we go on with the story. Ben was wide awake. He thought of other quotations from Emerson, as "The dice of God are always loaded." "Every secret is told, every crime punished,

every virtue rewarded, every wrong redressed." He thought of a hundred other things, but he could not go to sleep again. "What if Pete Small should suspicion something and track him? Was there snow enough to track him?" The clock struck eleven. "A thief steals from himself," kept dinging at his ears. He felt a heavy weight in his bosom, or perhaps a little below it (was it the mince pie?). He got up and looked across toward Pete Small's. It was not very far—only three-quarters of a mile. The full moon near its setting was shining brightly on the snow.

He dressed himself, put on his cap and mittens, stole quietly from the house, went to the cow-shed, got the dead mink, and retraced the steps he had made two hours before. He placed the animal in the trap, sprung it, and then started toward home again. From an opening in the woods the schoolhouse was plainly visible a quarter of a mile away. As Ben looked in that direction he saw a light in the rear window. In a moment it went out, then reappeared, continuing longer than before. This excited his curiosity and he determined to walk over to the schoolhouse to see what it meant. The light was extinguished and relighted several times before he reached the rear window.

Approaching the window cautiously and looking in, he could see by the flickering light of the open stove door half a dozen or more fellows; among them were Carl Brown, Dick Snyder, Ed Duncan, and one or two whom he did not know. Carl and Dick had Mr. White's "blue book" looking through it. Ed had his little clock winding up and setting off the alarm. Carl told him to stop the racket, but Ed did not stop. A scuffle ensued, in which

the clock fell to the floor and was broken. Carl gave it a kick which sent it rolling to the farther corner of the room. Dick closed the "blue book" and threw it into the stove. He and Carl then returned to the teacher's desk, struck a match, and began overhauling the papers and other things.

As Ben's curiosity was fairly satisfied by this time, he quietly retraced his steps, went home, crept up to bed, and was soon asleep. For the only time during the winter the broomstick failed to awaken him in the morning. A vigorous shaking from his mother aroused him at five, and he was an hour late at the barn. His mind was busy all day with the events of the night before, but for obvious reasons he did not say anything. He was in a dilemma. He could tell Mr. White all about it; he knew the guilty parties, but how could he explain his presence at the schoolhouse at midnight?

CHAPTER V.

Let me digress to say that Mrs. Brown and Mr. White were now the best of friends. Maggie had come home from the seminary to spend the vacation. Carl's roommate at the business college had come home with Carl, Mr. White had dismissed school from Wednesday—Christmas day—till the following Monday. Mrs. B. had employed Ben's sister Hannah to help with the work, and the Brown residence was given over in a large measure to merry-making and sociability. Mr. White had called once or twice by invitation and as often of his own accord. He went to the schoolhouse on Friday morning to get a book of his that Maggie and Mrs. Brown wanted very much to

read, and, as you may infer, he found things in a sad plight.

The lock that he had furnished at his own expense and put on the teacher's desk was broken, burnt matches, books, and papers were scattered all about, the hour hand of his mute and battered little clock pointed toward twelve, and his "blue book," that he treasured more than anything else, was gone. The news of the depredation soon spread over the neighborhood and there was a general commotion. A squad of men and boys gathered at the schoolhouse, but the only clue that could be obtained was tracks in the snow leading from near Pete Small's to the schoolhouse, or near it, and from there to Mrs. D.'s.

Small stated that Ben was at his house the night before, and he noticed that when he left he started across the feed lot. Carl Brown stated that he and his chum were at the village the night before attending a church sociable, and that as they passed the schoolhouse they saw, or thought they saw, a light inside. Mr. White hooted the idea of Ben's having anything to do with it. Pete Small said he would "like to have somebody explain them tracks." Mr. White stated the law in the case and the penalty attached to the breaking of a lock. Dick Snyder trembled a little and said he thought Persimmons ought to be arrested.

As a result of the conference, notices written by Mr. White were posted that afternoon in different parts of the district, which read as follows:

TEN DOLLARS REWARD!

The above reward will be given to any person who will furnish reliable information that will

lead to the arrest and conviction of the person or persons who broke into the Hickory Hollow Schoolhouse on the night of Dec. 26, committing certain depredations and destroying certain property.

J. R. BROWN,
PETER SMALL,
HENRY SYPHER,
School Directors.

Ben had been at work all day repairing a piece of fence back of the Deacon's barn with a view to having one place where he might put Guinea at night and find her there when he came back in the morning. This was by no means an easy task, but a more difficult task was to build a fence in his mind high enough to expose the guilty parties to the outrage of the night before, and at the same time not expose himself, and reveal the wrong which his hand had committed, but which he caught before it fell.

When he was working at this double task, Carl and his chum came out "to have some fun with Persimmons." They told him that old Burdann, the constable, was coming that evening to arrest him; that the schoolhouse had been broken into the night before and things torn up generally, and that they had traced the deviltry to him; that Pete Small said he did it, and besides they had tracked him. As they walked away Carl turned to say, "You had better skip the country, Persimmons. You will have to go to the pen. You will have to wear broader stripes than that old jacket has that you are wearing."

Ben said that he was ready to be arrested, and, though he appeared indifferent, it must be confessed their talk

made him uneasy. He had not thought of his tracks in the snow since the night before, when it occurred to him that Small might track him from the mink trap. When he went home in the evening he learned that the directors had called and talked with his mother about his being away from home the night before and as to the time he returned.

Later in the evening, Mr. White called and rehearsed all that was said and done at the impromptu meeting at the schoolhouse in the morning. He asked Ben if he really did come back by the schoolhouse on his way home from Small's? Ben said that he did, at which his mother expressed great surprise.

"What induced you," said Mr. White, "to come back that way?"

"I saw a light there," said Ben.

"Did you see anyone inside?" continued Mr. White.

"Yes," replied Ben; "I could not recognize them all, but I think now I know who they all were."

Mr. White became excited. Fortunately he did not ask Ben about the time of night, but proceeded to speak of the notices and the ten dollars reward, and told Ben to keep quiet till the proper time came to speak. He said he would go over to the Deacon's and call again the next day.

Ben was in a quandary. He was in a trap, and it was not a dream. He went out and looked at the stars, but he could not think of any poetry that would fit the case. No quotation from Emerson would do it. He felt a weight bearing him down, and it was not mince pie.

It had been reported all over the neighborhood that it was he who had broken into the schoolhouse. The

whole truth would have to be told, including the purloining of the mink. Everybody would think he was a thief, and returned the stolen property that one time only because he was afraid of being tracked and caught. Mr. White would lose confidence in him. His mother would ——; no, she wouldn't. She would not lose confidence in him.

Do you think, boys and girls, that Ben played the baby act when he went in and told his mother the whole story from beginning to end? I don't. The truth is, whether you believe it or not, no better friend or wiser counselor can be found on earth than a mother. When boys and girls do things that they think must be covered up from mother and father, there is something wrong. They are on the wrong track; the track that leads to trouble.

"I am proud of you Bennie," said his mother when he had finished. "I expect there will be a trial and you will have to be a witness, but just tell the truth and you will come out all right."

Just then there was a rap at the door. The caller wanted to see Ben outside. "It is Burdann," thought Ben, "and I'll have to go." But he was mistaken. It was Deacon Brown. He spoke to Ben in a confidential, winning tone. "I understand," said he, "that you saw through the window the fellows who were in the schoolhouse the other night. Is that correct?"

"Yes, sir," replied Ben.

"Well, was Carl among them?" said the Deacon, softly.

"Yes, sir," answered Ben, firmly.

The Deacon put his hand in his pocket and continued

thoughtfully: "How much was that bill of yours for work summer before last—twenty dollars, was it?"

"Twenty-three dollars," answered Ben; "just the amount we still owe on the team, according to your way of counting."

"Well, we will call that square," said the Deacon; "and here is a five-dollar bill besides, which I will give you if you will say nothing whatever to anybody about Carl's being one of the number."

"I cannot take the money," said Ben, "but I have always thought it just that mother should be allowed the twenty-three dollars. I have no desire to injure Carl, and do not propose to make any talk about the affair unless required to do so as a witness."

"All right," said the Deacon, as he returned the money to his pocketbook. "I do not think there will be any trial, and we will call the twenty-three dollars square."

As soon as Ed Duncan read one of the notices he began to think of state's evidence as a means of securing the ten dollars reward. On Saturday evening he saw Mr. White and told him the whole story, and though he promised Mr. White to keep perfectly mum till arrests should be made, he confided the secret to several other parties, and by Sunday evening Ed's account of the affray was known to the entire community.

Early Monday morning Carl and his chum returned to the business college. Dick Snyder went to visit a relative in a distant county, and the trial was postponed indefinitely.

Mrs. Brown made Mr. White a present of another clock, but the blue book, which contained many choice clippings, gems for memorizing, schemes, plans, and pro-

grams for school work, the photographs of several of his scholars, and many other things of value to him, which it had taken years to accumulate, was lost beyond recovery.

After the storm which threatened to burst upon Hickory Hollow had blown over, domestic and educational sunshine prevailed for a time. Ben continued to work for the Deacon and to apply himself to his studies till the end of the term. He was now eighteen years of age and was beginning to trace mental etchings of his life work. He had completed his common school education and could easily have passed the final examination if there had been any final examination to pass. He did pass the examination of the county superintendent and obtained a certificate to teach, though he had no immediate notion of teaching. It ought to be a matter of rejoicing on the part of boys and girls now in the country schools that, by means of a well-planned course of study which most counties in the western states in particular have had the good sense to adopt, they may at any time know "where they are at" and what will come next.

Ben closed the door of the Hickory Hollow Schoolhouse the last day of the term with two ambitions in his soul. Let me say just here that the work of the common school is not completed until it has fired the soul of the boy or girl with at least one ambition. When it fails to do this, there is something wrong with the school or with the boy or girl.

Mr. White was himself fully imbued with a determination to complete the course of study at the university, and had, by simply rehearsing to Ben his longings in this regard, imbued him with a like desire. This ambition took deeper and deeper root in his mind and heart as the

days went by. It seemed to him, however, that a stone wall intervened. He was the main dependence for support of his widowed mother, five sisters, and crippled brother.

Ben's other ambition was subsidiary to this one, but it frequently happens that subsidiary things are the most important of all things. Money, for example, is subsidiary to all that it will buy. Ben's subsidiary ambition was to buy a little farm and pay for it, that his mother might have a home. Since that night in 1862 when his father was called to the door of their southern home, shot down like a dog, and left to die on the portico of his own house, she had known only suffering, privation, and drudgery.

During the summer Ben worked hard on the land his mother had leased from Deacon Brown, but the soil was poor or worn out, as farmers say, and with all his hard work only half a crop could be realized.

Mrs. D. had placed the settlement of her husband's estate in the south in the hands of an attorney. During the summer the attorney had sent her a draft for six hundred dollars with the information that after paying debts, mileage, interest, and cost of litigation of doubtful claims, and attorney's fees, this was all there was left. Yes, all that was left of an estate valued five years before at not less than five thousand dollars, and against which there were claims of less than one thousand, as nearly as Mrs. D. could recall and count up. But that is the way of the world, boys and girls. As in days of old there were scribes and hypocrites, who devoured widow's houses, so there are today. This is one reason why girls as well as boys should

be taught to transact business. The fact that the attorney was a relative of Mrs. D. did not help matters any.

It was soon known that Mrs. D. wanted to buy a little farm and would pay six hundred dollars down. It would be interesting to talk about all the farms in the neighborhood for sale, each of which, in the estimation of its owner, would be a little paradise for Mrs. D. and her family. First the Deacon called. He talked long and feelingly. He reminded Mrs. D. of how he had befriended her, how he took her in and gave her shelter when there was no eye to pity her and no arm to save.

He quoted scripture and expatiated again upon the merits of the farm upon which she was then living.

The farm, forty acres, he said would sell any day for fifty dollars an acre, but he would make it to her and Ben for even sixteen hundred—six hundred down, time on balance. He quoted more scripture, and finally arose to leave, remarking as he did so that he would call the next day with his carriage and they would go to town and fix up the papers. When Ben replied that they were not yet ready to buy, but would think about it, the Deacon smiled and remarked that other parties were waiting to take the farm at a higher figure. Ben then told him frankly to sell it to the other parties, that he and his mother did not want it. At this the Deacon seemed perplexed, and said something about ingratitude as he went away.

Pete Small had a farm to sell, consisting mostly of brush, barrens, and stumps, with a few rocks projecting from the clay here and there. He called one sultry day

in August, and after getting a drink of water inquired for Ben. Mrs. D. sent one of the girls to call Ben, who was working in the field near by. Small shook hands with Ben in a friendly, guilty way, and asked "How much was that little bill for helping me thresh a year or two ago? I declare I had most forgotten that!"

"Three dollars," said Ben. Pete put his hand in his pocket, but found he had, in changing his clothing that afternoon, forgotten his pocketbook! He said, however, that he would hand it to Ben the next time he met him. He then proceeded to tell Mrs. D. and Ben confidentially that there was a flaw in the title to the Deacon's farm, and dwelt at length on the superiority of the one he had to sell. After exacting a promise from Ben and his mother to come and look at his farm, he rode away.

A real estate agent from town called early one morning with a splendid team and carriage and took the widow and her son to look at farms. They had a delightful outing, a first-class dinner at a farm house, and saw some pretty good farms, but they did not buy just yet.

It happened on this tour with the agent that they passed a place which was apparently deserted. There were a good house and barn, orchard, and other improvements, but neglect was everywhere visible. Ben asked the agent about it and was informed that it had belonged to a shiftless fellow who, he had understood, had traded it to a man in Ohio for a patent right to manufacture farm gates and portable pig pens, and that the purchaser was coming soon to take possession of it. Ben winked at his mother and looked back at the place as the agent clucked the team into a lively trot.

A day or two after, Ben went over to the neighborhood where the neglected farm was located. He learned from a clever farmer living near, that the farm belonged to an old gentleman living in town who had bought it a few years before and improved it for his son. The son was a visionary, erratic sort of fellow who had tried first to make a fortune out of bees, then chickens, then silk worms, besides trying on a large scale the growing of broomcorn, buckwheat, and white beans. These all in turn had failed. The old gentleman had become tired of helping his son out at the end of each year. The wife of the said son had now gone home with her children to spend a few months visiting her mother, and the son had taken an agency to sell and set up windmills.

Ben went to see the old gentleman. They went out and looked over the farm together. Ben was satisfied that the soil was of the very best and only needed cultivation to produce abundant crops. It was only three miles from town and half a mile from a good schoolhouse. He took his mother and sister Hannah the next day to look at it. It was the judgment of men in the neighborhood that the farm with its improvements was worth fifty dollars per acre. It should be remembered that the price of land in Illinois at that time was only about half as much as it is now.

The following week Ben bought the farm—sixty acres at forty dollars per acre—incurring a debt of eighteen hundred dollars, to be paid within five years.

CHAPTER VI.

Dear boys and girls, we must now leave Ben for awhile and trace the career of Carl Brown.

Carl returned from the business college in June with his diploma, setting forth that he was a business graduate now, ready to take a position in any store, bank, office, counting-room, or to fill a vacancy in any line of business needing a good bookkeeper. While all this was claimed in general by Carl and his diploma, he thought the banking business best suited to his taste and proficiency.

While loafing around home and riding about in his road cart, he one day passed along where Ben was plowing corn. "Hello, Persimmons, still rooting in the ground, are you?" said he.

"Yes," replied Ben; "I am like the steward that St. Luke tells about, only I am different. I cannot beg, and to dig I am not ashamed."

"Oh, going to be a preacher, aren't you?" said Carl.

"I am a preacher now," said Ben. "I preach to this growing corn and it preaches to me. My church is a big one. The birds are the choir, the flowers carpet the aisles, the sun is the chandelier, the clouds are the frescoing, the gladness of nature is the incense, work is the prayer."

"I always thought you would go crazy some time," said Carl.

"What are you going to do?" said Ben, apparently not noticing Carl's last remark.

"Be a banker," said Carl, as he tipped his hat to one side of his head.

"Isn't the banking business pretty well overdone?" said Ben.

"Yes, but there is plenty of room at the top," said Carl.

"I have heard there is a good deal of room up there," said Ben, "but I have noticed that it is chaffy stuff mostly that is blown the highest. For my part, I shall stick pretty close to the ground. Click, click; get up, Jim." Ben plowed on and Carl rode away.

To gratify Carl and his mother and to rid himself of their incessant prodding him about it, the Deacon spoke one day to his friend, Mr. Bond, of the First National Bank, about Carl.

"We do not really need any one now," said Mr. B., "but if he has a mind to come in here and work awhile, he may do so; he can be learning, but of course there will not be any pay in it for him. It is customary for boys to work three to six months on trial, without pay, to learn the business. You understand how that is, Mr. Brown."

"Y-e-s," drawled the Deacon, "but Carl has been attending the business college and has a diplo"——

"Tut, tut," interrupted Mr. Bond; "if he is a bright boy and has a good common school education, can write a fair hand, and can add, his diploma is not worth that (snapping his fingers) for our business."

Now, boys and girls, I am only telling you what Mr. Bond said. My own opinion about it is that a course of study at a good business college may be a good thing for the right kind of a boy or girl. Not only for prospective

bankers and merchants, but for mechanics and farmers as well.

Carl tried it in the bank for one week, at the end of which Mr. Bond told him he had no further use for him. Mr. Bond told the Deacon that his boy "could write a fair hand, but that he was indolent and could not add." Mrs. Brown was very indignant at this, declaring it to be prejudice. She "never did like the Bonds anyway," she said. "They were always trying to domineer over somebody. Can't add, indeed! why, Carl could add when he was only six years old."

"I guess not, mother," said the Deacon. "Certainly Carl can add, but he cannot add as adding is done in banks." Of course Mrs. Brown had the last word, but that is a matter of no consequence to us.

Carl continued to be a gentleman of leisure till one very busy morning in harvest time, when the following conversation took place between him and his father:

"Carl," said the Deacon, "I wish you would go and change your clothes and go out and help Ben D. with the shocking today."

"Well, that is pretty cool," said Carl. "I am not a farmer; I am a banker."

"I think it is pretty warm," said the Deacon, possibly referring to the weather. "I think you have loafed and fooled around about long enough, and I mean what I say. I want you to change your clothes and go and help Ben."

"I will drive the harvester," said Carl, "but I'll not shock."

"You can't drive the harvester," continued the father. "The grain is lodged, and it requires somebody that knows

how to handle the machine; besides, I'll not have you dictate to me what I shall do and what you will do."

"Well," said Carl, snappishly, "I'll not help Persimmons shock; I'm no clodhopper."

At this Deacon became angry and said: "See here, young man, I have had enough of your tomfoolery and business college nonsense. I tell you right here and now, you will do as I say or you will leave the premises this very day."

"All right; I'll leave then," said Carl.

The Deacon took the team and began hitching it to the harvester. Carl went and sat down in the barn door and meditated, muttering thus: "I'll show the old governor that I can get along without him. I'll go to St. Louis, get a place in a bank, take my sheepskin along, tell them I have had experience, worked for the First National at ——ville. Let me see how much money I've got. Three dollars and seventy-five cents left from that V the old lady gave me yesterday morning. I guess I'll not tell her I'm going; she would bawl and sniffle around; besides, I don't want anybody to know where I am. I can send for my trunk if I want it. I'll come back in five or ten years, pocket full of stuff, city clothes, brown moustache, silk hat, gold watch chain, diamond what-you-may-call-it."

As he said this he pulled out the gold watch his mother had given him the day he graduated from the business college and looked at it. It was seven o'clock. The St. Louis train left the station at eight. He walked out to the road just as Dick Snyder came along in a road cart. (Dick had returned from his visit soon after Mr. White left the neighborhood.) He got in and rode to town with

Dick, confiding to him all that had happened that morning, with the injunction on his part and a solemn pledge on Dick's part to keep the matter a profound secret. He was too late for the train. He and Dick, however, loafed around town till noon, playing some sort of game with balls which were rolled about on a large table covered with green cloth, punching the balls with sticks that looked like blackboard pointers.

Dick declared he must go. Carl went to a restaurant and got his dinner, then went back and played again till train time. As the playing cost something, he now had but three dollars and ten cents, just the price of a ticket to East St. Louis. "I am out of money," thought Carl, as he took his seat in the car, "but I can pawn my watch for twenty-five dollars; that will keep me going till I can make a raise."

It was dark as Carl started to walk across the big bridge over the Father of Waters at St. Louis. He had taken not more than a dozen steps when he was confronted by a portly, blue-coated, brass-buttoned, schooner-hatted gentleman with a little club in his hand. Carl looked at him in a puzzled way. The officious official pointed back to the window of a little office that Carl had passed and said "bridge fare." "How much is it?" said Carl. "Nickel," said the officer. "I have no money," said Carl. The man with the club eyed him from head to foot and said:

"Who are you? Where did you come from and where are you going?"

Now, Carl had read in a little book, that his chum at school had loaned him, that it would not do to appear tender or timid when talking to a policeman, so he braced

up and said, "I have been clerking in a bank and am going to St. Louis to look for a situation. I have some papers that I think will help me out."

"Let me see your papers," said the man. Carl handed him the big envelope containing his diploma. The man looked at it for a moment and returned it to him. "What is your scheme for grub while looking for a job?" continued the man.

"I thought I might pawn my watch," said Carl.

"Let me see your watch," said the man. He examined Carl's watch much more minutely than he did the diploma, and said "Elgin make, Boss filled, all O. K.," and returned the watch to Carl. He then handed Carl a nickel with which to pay his fare across the bridge, glanced around, and, as no one seemed to be in sight, he walked with Carl several steps. He finally stopped and said: "I'll tell you what to do. Do you see that light straight ahead, beyond the end of the bridge?" Carl saw it. "Well," continued the man, "the pawn shops are all closed now and you can't do anything till tomorrow morning. You go to the place where the light is; it will be open all night; they will let you stay there till morning. Wait there for me, and I'll show you tomorrow morning where you can sell your watch."

The man turned to walk back and Carl felt relieved, for he could not help thinking how easy it would be for the man to murder him and throw his body in the river below. There was, in fact, no shadow of probability of the man's hurting him; but the kind of books he had been reading led Carl to think he had escaped the hands of an assassin. He went to the place where the light was, went in and sat down on a long bench at the farther end of the

room. The place was dirty, dingy, and smelt sour and rotten. Men in dirty, ragged clothing kept coming in, drinking something at the high counter, laughing, swearing, quarreling, using obscene language, sometimes hugging each other, and playing the fool generally.

Carl finally stretched himself on the bench and tried to sleep. He thought of his own clean, tidy bedroom at home, and wondered how his father would feel when his mother would cry and accuse him of driving their boy away from home. "Well," he thought, "if he had not wanted me to work with Persimmons, I might have done it; but that fellow and I never could get along together. I'm in for it now; I'll face the world and make my fortune."

The clatter of wagons outside awakened Carl the next morning. He aroused himself, rubbed his eyes, and looked around. The place was nearly deserted. Four or five begrimed and besotted fellows were lying on the floor and on the benches, apparently asleep. He stretched himself and went out into the street; he walked up and down the wharf awhile, looking at the river, the bridge, and the boats. He then started up one of the narrow streets. Soon he saw a sign consisting of three yellow balls suspended in front of a little shop which a man was sweeping out. He went in and talked with the man about the watch. The man looked at it and looked at Carl suspiciously, and finally told him in very bad English he would lend him ten dollars and take the watch as security.

Carl accepted the proposition and as he walked away he met the policeman who had stopped him on the bridge the night before.

"You didn't wait for me," said the man.

"No," said Carl; "I didn't suppose I would ever see you again."

The man asked Carl if he had sold his watch. Carl told him what he had done and showed him the pawn ticket.

"I will give you a dollar for the ticket," said the man, "if you want to sell it."

"All right," said Carl, and he felt rather cheerful as he walked away with eleven dollars in his pocket. Carl went to a restaurant, washed himself, brushed up his clothes, ate his breakfast, and then started out to look for a situation. He went from bank to bank, office to office, store to store, but a cold shake of the head or a querulous *no* was all that met him.

He bought a daily, read the "want" column, and made note of all the places that he thought he could fill. Once or twice he was asked for his references, but his diploma did not seem to help him any. "You lack experience." "We don't want a country boy." "You are too verdant." "You are too light weight." "We want a hustler." These and such as these were the replies he received to his entreaties for a position. After three days of fruitless search he almost decided to return home, even if he had to work with Persimmons in the harvest field. He now barely had money sufficient to take him home, yet he felt too proud to go home; he would do anything rather than go home. Thinking of home led him to walk again toward the river bridge. He saw on a sheet of cardboard tacked by the door of what appeared to be a large warehouse, the sign—

MEN WANTED FOR RIVER SERVICE.

A new idea struck him. "Perhaps they want a clerk or a bookkeeper," thought he. "I'll go in and see."

"Yes, we want a few more men," said the baldheaded old gentleman who sat on a high stool in front of a case full of pigeonholes filled with papers like a postoffice, "but I don't think you will do," said he, looking sharply at Carl over his spectacles. "You do not look like you could handle barrels, boxes, gunny bags, chicken coops, and live hogs."

"Yes, I can," said Carl; for the situation was now becoming desparate; "try me. I was raised on a farm and know more about work than you think I do."

"Have you any references?"

"No," said Carl, determined never to show his diploma again.

"Run away from home?"

"No, sir," said Carl, swallowing and looking out at the door.

"I guess we don't want you," said the man on the stool. Carl turned to leave. "All right, come back; we'll try you," said the old gentleman. "What is your name?" "Carl Spenser," said Carl, blushing a little, either because he had lied or because he was so chagrined at himself for being ashamed to acknowledge that his name was Brown.

The old man wrote the name in a book, filled out a little paper and had Carl sign it, which he did without reading it. (Boys and girls, never be guilty of signing a paper without reading and understanding it.) He then filled out a little ticket and handed it to Carl, saying as he did so: "You are booked for deck work on the Calhoun.

She leaves for Peoria tomorrow and is loading now at dock B. Hand this to Mr. A., second mate, and he will tell you what to do."

Carl had never been on board a steamboat; he had never seen one till his arrival in St. Louis a few days before, but he pulled off his coat and went at his task as the only thing left for him to do.

"Hyah, hyah, hyah," said a negro to an Irishman, we'll haf to nishuate dat squashy lookin' fellah; won't he look slimy as a catfish when we roll him roun' on dis heah deck and den duck him in de riber to rench him off? Hyah, hyah." "Yis, we'll make him trate to de whisky," said the Irishman.

CHAPTER VII.

My dear young friends, did you ever see deck-hands at work on a steamboat? If not, perhaps you have seen men driving hogs up a narrow chute for the purpose of loading them into cars. To my mind there is a striking similarity. There is a gang plank somewhat like a section of sidewalk, about twenty feet long, reaching from the boat to the river bank, up and down which the hands jog in a lazy dog trot, one row going one way with burdens such as one man can carry, the other row going the other way empty-handed, usually. The mate, who has charge of the men, carries a billet, a sort of compromise between a walking stick and an Indian war club. This he flourishes, and as he orders the men to do things he swears every second breath and hurries the men up with just such words or sounds as men use when carring hogs. Occasionally he punches a laggard with his billet.

CARL LOST HIS BALANCE.

Carl's first work was to assist in loading malt for the Beardstown brewery. The malt was in sacks, each weighing about one hundred pounds. He had made two or three trips up and down the gang plank, but the waves and the slight motion of the boat made him dizzy. He was about midway the gang plank with a sack of malt on his shoulder, and as he was lagging somewhat, the mate came hustling up and said to him, "Hurry up, Punkin." Carl turned and said, "Sir?" At this the mate cursed him and gave him a punch with his club. In his fright and dizziness, Carl lost his balance and tumbled backward into the river, malt and all.

Raish, the negro, who, you will remember, was so anxious to "nishuate" Carl, was opposite, empty-handed. In an instant he plunged into the river to rescue Carl. The water was deep and the malt seemed to hold him under. It was several seconds before he came to the surface, but as soon as he did so, Raish's strong arm seized him and placed him on board. Carl was easily resuscitated. He sat on the edge of the deck dripping and pale as a ghost, while the work of loading the boat went on.

He witnessed a curious panorama while he was under the water, an experience not uncommon to people on the verge of drowning. He saw a vivid picture or vision of little Paul Baptist, whom he and Dick Snyder ducked, or baptised, as they called it, in a snow drift several years before. He recalled the scene of ducking the school teacher one time, in which he took an active part, because the teacher refused to treat at Christmas. He saw Persimmons riding the rail in the tar-and-feathering at school.

These are only a few of the scenes, but they will serve

to illustrate. The lost malt was charged up to Carl to be deducted from his wages. It might impede navigation somewhat, but if all the malt to be manufactured within the next fifty years could be sunk to the bottom of the Mississippi, it would hasten the millennium more than fifty years, perhaps a thousand. What a *bier* it would be!

That night, as the boat was steaming up the river toward Alton, Raish came and sat down on the deck by Carl and consoled him. He evidently thought Carl had been sufficiently "nishuated." The conversation would be interesting, but we cannot stop to give it.

"One fing, sho," said Raish, "if dat mate eber punches me wid his club, I'll kill him. I'll do it, sho's you bawn; if I don't dey ain't no snakes. Ise free now, and Ise not gwine to be punched no moh by nobody."

It would make this story too long to tell all that Carl experienced on the river. The dirty hammock in which he slept contrasted meanly with the snowy-sheeted bed at home which his mother made for him so carefully and downy-like every day; the dank river air and stench of dead fish and rottenness from a hundred towns and cities contrasted loathingly with the pure prairie atmosphere that came through the screen of his bedroom window at home. The black coffee and bacon of doubtful age, the dingy-looking soup, the hash and hodge-pudding made from all the scraps of victuals from the dining room of the upper deck contrasted nauseously with the morning, noon, and evening meal of food the cleanest, the best, and the most wholesome, over which his father asked a formal blessing three times a day, supplemented now by a devout, silent "Dear Father, feed Carl today." The ravenous mosquitoes, which, like a guilty conscience,

cannot be screened away, and whose hideous piping note, twenty octaves above any other note on earth, exultingly and tantalizingly says "You cannot hide from me," contrasted with nothing he had ever experienced before. "Oh, for one slice of mother's bread, for one slice of home-cured ham, for one glass of clean, cold, sweet milk from the springhouse down under the big elm tree at home."

But he was in for it; he had commenced at the bottom with a view to working up. Have you not observed, boys and girls, that a great many people spend their lives beginning at the bottom?

Raish became Carl's friend and companion. He was a negro of powerful muscle, and Carl kept close to him in the gang.

When the stretchers were used (a stretcher is a sort of frame with two chains running from side to side, the two side pieces of which end in handles, and which is used by two men for carrying heavy barrels, etc.), Raish would load the stretcher so as to favor Carl by giving him the lighter end.

While unloading the malt at Beardstown the mate, who had been drinking more than usual — no small amount, by the way—was more abusive to the men than usual. Raish had helped Carl to shoulder his sack of malt, the man behind had helped Raish to shoulder his, and they started down the gang plank. The mate had had some words with the agent who received the cargo and was angry. Carl, or Punkin, as everybody called him, was lagging. The mate met him with an oath and a punch from his cudgel. "Let up on dat," said Raish. At this the mate doubled his oaths and gave Raish

a terrible punch in the ribs. The negro grated his teeth, but trotted on with his burden.

It was a beautiful summer afternoon as the boat steamed away from the landing, through the drawbridge, and up the river. Muscooten Bay was dotted with fishing boats, sail boats, and pleasure boats. Excursion parties had come from many miles away to spend the day on the delightful fishing and boating grounds of this historic old town. A picnic party from Riverside Park on the left came down to the water's edge to see the steamboat. The reflection of the sinking sun upon the water painted another picnic party immediately below, as antipodes to the first party. Carl thought it was the prettiest sight he had ever seen. A band of music was playing somewhere, and the subdued and mellowed tones reached the steamboat with an effect that only those can realize who have experienced it. For a few minutes, the only time during his trip, Carl was happy.

Raish continued to mutter, grate his teeth, and to cast vicious glances toward the mate. As the boat neared Browning, the mate laid down his cudgel for a moment to light a cigar. Quick as a flash, Raish pulled an ugly open knife from his pocket and made for the mate. He made several passes at him, gashing his face and neck in a terrible manner. The mate's efforts at resistance were futile. The negro had the advantage of him and no one offered to assist the mate or restrain the negro. The mate sank down on the deck, partly from the loss of blood and partly from the influence of liquor, gasping horrible curses. The captain, clerk, and several of the passengers hurried down to his relief. Raish jumped into

the river, swam ashore, and, disappearing among the willow underbrush, made his escape; in fact, no one tried to capture him. The mate was taken to Peoria, where he lay a long time in the hospital, but finally recovered, and was still a few years ago first mate of the Calhoun.

The deck hands gathered on the deck in the evening and related incidents and experiences of river life, murders, accidents, drownings, and hair-breadth escapes. Much of this was of the most blood-curdling sort. As they gloated over these things, Carl felt lonely, afraid, and wished himself at home again. The owls hooted at him from the river bank on either side. The deck hands, mostly negroes, were very superstitious. They all supposed the mate would die; they reported him dead, in fact, and one death on the up trip, they asserted, meant two going down.

Carl felt that he was friendless after Raish left, but Rooney, the Irishman, sought to befriend him. Learning from Carl that he had no money, he offered his credit for Carl's benefit at the bar for whisky and tobacco, which, we may say to Carl's credit, he refused. He assured Carl that they would see the elephant together when they got to Peoria. The latter city, with its long rows of distilleries, where more good corn is worked up into bad whisky than in any other place in this fair "land of the free and the home of the brave," was reached early Sunday morning. After breakfast, Carl assisted in unloading the cargo, then went to the captain and told him if he would pay him up he would like to quit; but the captain told him there was no chance for him to get any money till they got back to St. Louis, reminding him that he had

signed an agreement to that effect. Carl remembered signing something, but he had no idea what it was. The captain told him, however, that his credit would be good at the bar or huckster counter for anything he needed. It may be of interest to state that these two institutions of the boat absorbed regularly more than half the wages of the deck hands, and a gambling device took a good share of the rest.

Carl was thoroughly disgusted with river life and pretty well disgusted with himself. He walked down the gang plank, up the landing, up into the city, pawned his coat for fifty cents, and started in a northerly direction, following what seemed to him the best traveled road. At noon he paid twenty-five cents at a farmhouse for the best dinner he had eaten since he left home. At night he stopped at a farmhouse, and the next morning paid his last quarter for his lodging and breakfast.

His self-respect began to rise and he determined to find work, if possible, and earn enough to buy a decent suit of clothes, for those he had were filthy and ruined, and if he must go home, he would do so, he thought, with some show of respectability. He did not succeed very well. Being hungry at noon, he stopped at two or three places and asked for something to eat, but was met with a cold, suspicious rebuff. "We have nothing for tramps. We work for what we get," was what the farmers told him who met him at the door.

To appease his hunger he climbed over into a cornfield and husked an ear of corn—a roasting ear—which he munched raw as he trudged along. About the middle of the afternoon he stopped at a farmhouse for a drink of water. The lady who met him at the door reminded him

very much of Mrs. D. She seemed so kind that he asked her for something to eat.

"I never refuse to feed anybody," said she, "if I have anything cooked. There are a great many tramps now; some of them are worthy and some are not, but a body never can tell, so I just feed them all."

Carl told her with tears in his eyes that he was not a tramp. After eating his lunch of cold beans, bacon, corn-bread, and buttermilk, Carl sat down on the doorstep and gave her a brief account of himself for the past ten days, reaching back to St. Louis, but no farther.

She felt sorry for Carl. She thought her husband would give him work. They were very busy just then, she said, with the oats harvest, which they were anxious to finish as soon as possible, so they could dig a well to supply water for the stock. The stock well had given out and they were bothered about water.

That night Carl slept in a good bed in a clean shirt which Mrs. Farmer Good gave him till she could wash his.

O, these blessed motherly mothers! What a dreary place the world would be without them. Who wonders that Napoleon said "The greatest need of France is mothers." Who wonders that mother is the last name upon the lips of the dying exile or of the culprit under the gallows. "Don't you want to lie on your little couch?" says the mother to the sick child. "No, no; mother's lap," is the sick reply. "What is your charge, mother, for your services through the long and weary watches of the night?" "Nothing, nothing; why, man alive, do you think I would take money for it?" No; mother's devotion is priceless.

CHAPTER VIII.

"Yes," said Farmer Good the next morning, "we can use you if you know how to work. Can you shock oats?"

"Oh, yes," said Carl, "I can do almost anything."

"That's the way I like to hear a young man talk," said Farmer Good. "There are so many young fellows now who are looking for a snap, that I sometimes wonder what the country is a-comin' to. Well, you may help George and Will shock and I'll go right on with the harvester."

Was it that the morning seemed so much like the Tuesday morning two weeks before? Was it the voice of Farmer Good? Was it the birds singing in the orchard, or the calves playing about the barn, or what was it that made Carl brush a tear from his eye with his shirt sleeve?

George and Will Good averaged up as two first-rate boys. George had passed the rubicon of twenty-one; Will was two years in the rear. Will was a talker, George was a worker; Will was easy-going and good-natured, George was quick-tempered and irritable.

Isn't it strange how nature amuses herself with these toys we call people? George preferred to work alone, so Will and Carl worked together, and they did nearly as much work as George, but Farmer Good was satisfied, for it was his boast that George could do as much work as two ordinary men. Carl really enjoyed the work. It may be questioned whether he ever did any work in his life before that he enjoyed. It was pleasurable to set up a big sheaf and range a dozen others around it, then break

down at the band and spread out two more for caps, and then smooth all down snug. In two days the oats harvest was finished. During this time Carl and Will talked enough to fill a large octavo book. Will had an eye to business college, a clerkship in town, and nice, easy work in the shade. Carl gave him a few pointers.

On Thursday morning the work of cleaning out and sinking deeper an abandoned stock well began. The windlass, borrowed from a neighbor, was set up and put in place. George, Will, and Carl drew straws for turns at working in the well. Farmer Good had gone to town for more bricks. It fell to Will to remove the bricks forming the wall of the well, and to Carl to remove the debris from the bottom and take the first turn at digging. Will's task had been completed and Carl was lowered to begin his. The accumulation of refuse at the bottom consisted of several dead rabbits, a few rats, a cat or two, an old, bottomless well-bucket, a dozen or so tin cans, an old curry comb, the lost monkey wrench, and, as the sale bills put it, "other articles too numerous to mention."

Carl's task was half completed when an improvised part of the windlass gave way, and an accident was averted only by George's alertness and strong right arm. This necessitated Will's going to the house, some distance away, for tools and material to repair the windlass; all of which would have taken but a few minutes if Will had not stopped to talk awhile with his mother about the well. Carl loaded up the mud box, then sat down upon it to rest. A sickening odor surrounded him; the muddy water was dripping down upon him from above. He looked at himself and thought, "This is another 'nishuation,' as

Raish would call it." This made him smile. He looked at himself again: "Well, this is fine, I must confess," said Carl to himself; "me, a born banker, in such a plight as this. Where is my diploma? In my coat pocket in Peoria. Well, let it stay there."

He then closed his eyes and looked inside of himself. An indescribable feeling came over him. It was not disgust; it was not remorse. The dictionary does not contain a word that will fit the case. If my young readers would like a clearer notion of how Carl felt than I can give them, I would advise them to read again the story of the Prodigal Son.

He began to feel chilly; he looked up at George and said: "Say, pull me up; I'm sick."

"Are you sick at your stomach?" said George.

"I guess it is my stomach," said Carl chokingly, in that cadaverous sort of voice that comes from the bottom of a well or the pit of despair.

"I can't pull you up very well," said George. "Will is coming now, and we'll soon have the windlass fixed."

Carl meditated thus: "I have not been a dutiful son; father and mother have been too good to me. I did not know the value of home and parents. Perhaps father would overlook my foolishness and give me another chance." He closed his eyes and said: "Oh, Lord, if you will help me out of this and help me to get home, I pledge my word and honor, though my word is not worth much and I have no honor left, but I do promise to straighten up and be a good, obedient boy. Try me; oh, Lord, try me."

He felt better, but after filling the box a few times he had to be pulled up. He went to the house and soon was

taken with a violent chill. He was quite sick during the afternoon and night and the following day, but the common-sense doctoring of Mrs. Good, with teas from her own garden herbs, unadulterated, and roots from the grove near by, together with the more effective nursing such as mothers do, and for which doctors frequently get five dollars a visit, brought him out all right.

The next afternoon—Saturday—he was able to travel. Farmer Good took him to town and gave him money enough to pay his fare home. This was more than he had earned, but they called it square.

Carl reached the station nearest his home a little before sunset and was wondering how he would get out home; he really felt too weak to walk, but come to test the matter, he felt pretty strong. He started down the road and had gone half a mile, when some one came clattering along behind him in a farm wagon, whistling "Merry Farmer Boy." Carl looked around and saw it was Ben. He turned from the road, hung his head, and looked away to let Ben pass.

"Hello, stranger, have a ride?" said Ben.

"Hello, Persi——Bennie," said Carl.

"Why, Carl, ghost of Beelzebub, where did you come from?" said Ben.

"Oh, I've been seeing a little of the world," said Carl, as he climbed into the wagon.

The evening was one of midsummer's loveliest and best. Nature was clothed in her airiest attire. A delicious perfume came from the grove on the right, girls were calling home the cows from the pastures, and quails were whistling bob white on the fences.

As they jogged along, Carl gave Ben a brief synopsis

of where he had been and what he had been doing, leaving out the maximum of bitter and dwelling upon the minimum of sweet. Ben in turn told Carl all that had happened at home and in the neighborhood. It seemed amazing to Carl that so much could happen in so short a time. Dick Snyder had been arrested for stealing. Ed Duncan was mixed up in the fracas, but saved himself by turning state's evidence. But home affairs were the most interesting. Guinea had been sold to the butcher, Maggie had a new piano, the Deacon had bought an incubator, and Pete Small had shot Major, Carl's dog.

Ben offered to drive all the way home with Carl, but the latter insisted upon walking the last half mile across the meadow. What if his father should refuse to let him come home; he would go in at the kitchen door, the port of entry of all prodigals. A delicious perfume came from the kitchen, the lingering fragrance of the Saturday's baking—oh, ambrosial smell! "Carl, my Carl, my lost boy," said his mother, as she threw her arms around him. The Deacon coughed, cleared his throat, and said, "Why, Carl, my son."

CHAPTER IX.

Ben took possession of the farm the following spring. There is nothing so pretty, so restful, so call-again like; nothing that so nearly approaches Eden as a well kept farmer's home. Rows of figures in a ledger are pretty, but rows of corn or wheat in a field are prettier, and the footings of the latter nine times in ten show more certain gains than those of the former. Barrels of sugar, sacks

of coffee, boxes of fruit, piles of vegetables, baskets of eggs, hams, and bacon in a grocery store are attractive, considering they are all dead things; but fruits in an orchard, vegetables in a garden, grain ripening in the field, cackling hens, and pigs in clover are much more attractive, because they are suggestive of life and living.

Boys and girls who long to exchange the scent of clover blossoms in the country for the smell of gas and garbage in the city; who long to exchange rural appetite and sleep for city excitement and dyspepsia; who long to exchange the certainty of employment for every working day in the year for the uncertainty of work and the dearth of waiting in the city are longing to dispose of a heaven-born birthright for not even so much as a mess of pottage.

Ben subscribed for a good agricultural paper and began to build an ideal farmer's home. There was no better soil to be found anywhere, but it was overrun with weeds and brambles. The orchard was one of choicest fruit trees, but lack of pruning and neglect gave it a forbidding and worthless appearance. The fences were racked about and out of repair; the house, barn, and other buildings had a dismal, forlorn, and rainy-day-like appearance from lack of paint; old machinery and remnants of old wagons were piled about; brush, weeds, and old fruit cans showed where a garden had been, and stock had pastured upon, tramped up, and ruined the front yard. I need not fill in the picture; a duplicate of it can be found in every neighborhood. From just such homes sons and daughters turn with disgust toward the overcrowded towns and sin-polluted cities in search of that which gratifies a taste for beautiful things which we all possess, and,

as they fancy—deluded mortals—to escape a life of hard work.

By a division of labor, Mrs. D. and one of the girls took care of the housework; Ben, his three sisters, and little hunch-back Hez worked out-doors, while Hannah continued to work for Mrs. Brown. Susan was made chief manager of the poultry section, and Laura of the dairy. There was, of course, some overlapping when dairy maid and poultry maid assisted in the kitchen, and again when all hands worked in the garden, but each department had its head, and all were busy, all were happy. A great many people have a good deal of the gypsy in them. To those who have not so much, there is nothing this side of heaven so fascinating, so happifying as home-making. Some of my girl readers will be inclined to smile at, some to ridicule and some to pity the lot of Ben's sisters. Do not waste your smiles or your sympathy, dear girls; for, while it was not all poetry, yet never did the sun shine more lovingly—

"On girlhood with its solid curves
Of healthful strength and painless nerves."

There is a Pete Small in every neighborhood. Sam Berkshire's farm joined that of Ben and his mother. When Sam was not quarreling with his neighbors, he was discussing with some one the distressing times and the downtrodden condition of the farmer. Early in the season Ben had put his half of the fence between the farms in good repair, and Sam had promised to do the same with his half "as soon as he could get a little spare time." I suppose my readers all know what a mirage is. Well, spare time and spare money are mirages.

Fall came and the fence had not been repaired. This

caused Ben no little anxiety, for his cornfield joined Berkshire's pasture, with only the shackling fence between, and Ben knew if the stock should once break over, endless vexation and loss would be the result. It is not always the unexpected that happens. One day in October, when Ben and two of the girls had gone with a load of apples to a neighboring cider-mill, Berkshire's cattle broke over the fence. When Mr. White went away to college he left his double-barrel shotgun and his dog, Hector, a splendid St. Bernard, in Ben's care. Mrs. D. saw the cattle in the corn and sent Susan, Hez, and Hector to drive them out. This was by no means easy, but they succeeded in getting them all out except one, a spotted yearling that Sam was pampering for the county fair. It was he who broke down the fence and led the others over. He claimed the privilege of going where he pleased and staying as long as he chose. I suppose Hector took in the situation, and, knowing that Hez was a cripple and Susan only a girl, concluded that the responsibility and the duty rested mainly with him. He accordingly quit barking, watched his chance, and grabbed young Tauro by the nose.

Tauro bawled, pawed the ground, and turned a somersault, but Hector held on till Tauro cried "enough," as all bullies are sure to do when gripped by the nose by some gritty Hector. The racket caused the other cattle all to break in again and surround the combatants. Hez and Susan climbed up on the fence. Susan began to cry, but Hez laughed, clapped his hands, and hurrahed at the fun. When Hector let go, Tauro started for home, bleeding and bellowing, and the rest of the cattle followed.

Mrs. D. heard the noise and went to see what was the

matter. Sam came too, with his gun. He was in a terrible rage, and would doubtless have shot Hector, but Mrs. D. called him to her, and it was impossible to shoot the dog without shooting the woman too. Mrs. D. tried to reason with Berkshire. She reminded him of how he had promised to repair the fence and called his attention to the half acre or more of corn that his cattle had trampled down and destroyed, but it was useless. Sam finally went away, swearing he would yet shoot the dog, cowhide the little scrub who had set the dog on his cattle, and sue them for a hundred dollars damage to his thoroughbred calf.

The mother and children patched up the fence as well as they could and went home.

Ben became very angry at the recital of what had happened, but could not help laughing at Hez's description of the panorama. He did not mind so much the loss of the corn, the threatened lawsuit, and even the threat to shoot Hector, as he did the thought that any man would dare to abuse his mother or threaten to whip his poor little crippled brother. His first thought was to go over to Berkshire's and see him about it, but he concluded to wait till morning.

Ben knew enough about the habits of cattle to know that they would be almost sure to come back and break into the field again about the same time the next day; so when morning came he decided to load Mr. White's gun and watch for the cattle, and if they should break in again to shoot one or two of them. It was the only way, he thought, to get even with as mean a man as Sam Berkshire. But the more he thought of this the more he did not like it. It would only result in trouble, and in a law-

suit which might cost them untold vexation and expense. It might even cost them their home. His mother thought it would be better to see Berkshire and induce him, if possible, to repair the fence. If he would not do this, it would even be better for Ben to fix the fence himself rather than run the risk of having his crop destroyed or get into trouble with Berkshire.

About the middle of the afternoon Ben saw the neighbor's cattle coming toward the part of the fence they had broken down the day before. Instead, however, of taking the gun he took a basket, and, gathering it full of ears, he met the cattle and called them to a part of the pasture where the fence was good and fed them. While they were eating the first he got them another basketful.

In the meantime Berkshire came from a place of concealment with his gun and sauntered down toward the place where Ben was feeding the cattle. He pretended to have been out quail-hunting and to have come along just at that time. Ben spoke to him pleasantly and said he "presumed the cattle must be hungry, otherwise they would not want to break in." "The fence is in bad condition," continued Ben, "and if you are too busy to repair it, I will try to repair it myself. I was very angry last night, Mr. Berkshire, when I came home and learned of your abusive language to my mother, but after thinking the matter over I concluded it was better to suffer a little wrong than to have trouble with a neighbor."

As Ben said this he looked straight at Berkshire and talked to him in a straight forward, manly way. Berkshire seemed humiliated and thoroughly ashamed of himself. He said he would drive his cattle home and put them up,

as there was little in the pasture for them to eat anyway. This he did, and within the next few days he repaired his portion of the fence.

After this, though they had little dealing with each other, they never had any more trouble. Now, boys and girls, Ben's plan may not have been the best. I merely state the facts and leave you to draw your own conclusions. I have observed, however, as a rule, that to get even with a mean man requires the other party to be still meaner. The popular saying, "Fight fire with fire," hasn't a particle of truth or good advice in it. To fight fire with water is much more effective.

As I have intimated, the entire family force was engaged a great part of the time in waging a warfare against weeds. There is nothing so arrogant as weeds, nothing so obtrusive, nothing that so defies the efforts of good people to accomplish good things in the world, unless it is the liquor traffic. Ben had learned from his reading that the vitality or strength of soil required to bring one big cockle-bur or jimpson to rank growth and perfection was sufficient to produce ten stalks of corn with fifteen or twenty good ears. The energy wasted by boys and girls sometimes in school in play, disorder, and mischief, works for intellectual growth as weeds in a garden for vegetable growth.

The soil, though fertile, was foul, and as a result the first year's crop was short, consequently it was only by the most rigid economy, supplemented by Hannah's earnings, that the payment on the farm was met.

The second year was much better; so much better, in fact, that the payment was easily met and some needed farm machinery, some furniture for the house, an extra

cow, some books that Ben wanted, and other things that make for comfort and prosperity were bought and paid for. Besides all this, there was a little money left.

About this time Mrs. D. received a letter from a relative in the South to the effect that fraud had been discovered in the settlement of her estate, and that if she and one or two of the children would come down it would result in restoring to her several hundred dollars of her money.

Deacon Brown heard of this incidentally and called one day to learn more about it and to offer any assistance that might be needed. He offered to lend Mrs. D. money for the trip, and if she desired it he would arrange to go with her and Hannah, having had, as he said, a great deal of experience in settling up estates and knowing pretty well the ins and outs of probate law. Mrs. D. thanked him very kindly and said that they were undecided as to what they would do.

Many family conferences were held about the matter. The widow knew that she had been defrauded out of at least two thousand dollars, but supposed there was no help for it. It was finally decided, however, though they had little faith in it, that Mrs. D., Hannah, and Ben should go. It was about the first of November when they started. They were met by loving relatives and sympathizing friends. The visit to the home and community where Mrs. D. was born, where her girlhood life was spent, and where she was married; where she and her husband started in life together, the house they built, the orchard they planted, and a hundred other things furnished a mental book, profusely illustrated, of mingled joy and sadness.

It was discovered that a young attorney had been instrumental in causing the letter to be written. He would, he said, for a retaining fee of twenty-five dollars and twenty-five per cent of all he might secure for Mrs. D., undertake the case. A prolonged interview with the county judge convinced Mrs. D. that it would not be necessary to employ an attorney, and that there was not very much to hope for in her case. He stated that if she would await the coming session of court the matter might be looked into, and if any errors had occurred, they would no doubt be corrected.

The widow, son, and daughter visited the neglected grave of the husband and father. They cleared it of rubbish, refilled it, sodded it, had a neat, substantial fence put around it, and placed above it a neat stone on which was inscribed his name, age, the date of his murder, and the inscription—

"A martyr to his convictions."

CHAPTER X.

At the solicitation of relatives Mrs. D. decided to remain awhile, but Ben and Hannah returned to their northern home. On the way home an incident occurred which I think will be interesting to my girl readers.

The train had crossed the high bridge over the Ohio river opposite Cincinnati. They had changed cars and started westward on the road which follows the river for many miles. As those know who have traveled that way, the train passes many little hamlets nestled under the bluffs, many rich gardens, groves, vineyards, and sweet,

happy homes, all hedged about and interspersed with flowers. The sun that had dreamed away the sleepy, hazy, autumn afternoon was near its setting. Sailboats were skimming the Ohio, ponderous steamboats were puffing up and down the river, ferryboats were shooting across, groups of happy children were playing along the shore gathering pebbles and shells, gathering health, joy, and inhaling the glad incense of nature.

The coach was crowded. Ben had given Hannah the seat next the window, and they gave themselves over to the full enjoyment of the panorama outside, exchanging comments in low tones, and sometimes smiling at each other at something ludicrous or charming.

Immediately behind them sat a lady, well dressed, wearing gold eye glasses, from one side of which dangled a delicate chain. She was apparently intelligent and well versed in good manners; by her side sat a gentleman equally well dressed, equally intelligent and well-mannered; he was fair complexioned, had long, curly hair, and a heavy brown moustache with a little horn at each end that pointed straight upward. Ben had heard a number of tete-a-tete remarks by them, such as "Oh dear, little Ducky, silly, spoony, disgusting, what a sweet one that was, this time next year, precious fools," etc. Ben paid no attention to them. It did not occur to him that the remarks were directed toward him and his sister.

If he gave any thought to the remarks at all, it was to the effect that the pair were interested in each other while Hannah and he were enjoying the scenery and the companionship of brother and sister. He had not noticed that his arm was resting on the back of the seat and that his hand now and then touched Hannah lightly on the

shoulder when something peculiarly interesting attracted his attention. He was unmindful of the passengers till Hannah remarked: "That man and woman in the seat behind us are making fun of us."

After listening a minute or two Ben was convinced that this was true. He at once became quite angry; for while a truer, nobler heart never beat in human breast, he was impulsive and at times had hard work to control his temper. "I'll settle their smirching," said Ben in an excited whisper. "I'll smash his nose and make his moustache point the other way, and I'll teach her"—— "No, no, Bennie," said Hannah, as she caught his hand in both of hers.

"Oh, you precious mutton!" murmured the lady to the gentleman, with her hand to her mouth. This was followed by a suppressed giggle.

Ben got up, flushed with anger, and walked to the rear of the coach. He looked for some time out through the glass door, then returned to his seat, but sat well toward the end of it, away from Hannah.

"Tiffy," whispered the gentleman. The lady snickered.

Ben arose again, walked to the front of the coach, and sat down in the now unoccupied front seat. The brakeman stopped and sat down beside him, and soon they began talking. They found each other interesting, and as the towns were now farther apart and the brakeman had more leisure, he returned, after attending to his duties at the station, to talk with Ben.

"Do you know that man and woman sitting behind that girl with a red feather in her hat?" said Ben.

"Yes," said the brakeman. "I don't know their

names, but I've seen them lots of times; don't know as I ever seen them together before, though. He is a married man; anyhow, coming down the other day he had a woman with him that called him paw; don't know what she is; old maid, I guess. They are on the train every once in a while. She is a temperance lecturer or 'vangelist or somethin'; a W. T. U. or"——

"W. C. T. U?" asked Ben.

"Yes, or G. A. R. or somethin'," said the brakeman; "and he is a book agent or missionary or some kind of a gospel agent. Anyhow they both travel on half-fare tickets."

"Do you know the girl?" asked Ben.

"Why!" said the brakeman, looking straight at Ben, "she's your sister, ain't she? looks enough like you."

"You wouldn't take her, then, to be my wife—my bride?" said Ben.

"Naw," said the brakeman, "nor nobody would, that's got a thimbleful of brains or even seen anybody 'cept his grandmother."

It was now dark and nothing more could be seen outside. Ben went back to his seat beside Hannah, who had made a pillow of her shawl and was leaning forward, resting her head on the seat in front of her, taking a nap. The lady and gentleman had exchanged seats for some cause. This placed Ben immediately in front of the lady. He had settled down in a restful position and closed his eyes. The lady was preparing to imitate Hannah's example, saying to the gentleman in an undertone as she did so, "I wonder if his little ducky will care if I lay my head here so near to his shoulder!"

Ben was not angry now, but he felt like talking. He

turned abruptly round and said: "His little ducky, as you call her, is my sister—my sister Hannah, and I do not suppose she will care if you lay your head near my shoulder. She is a very sensible girl, and not as soft as you think her to be, nor am I as green as you think me to be.

"You have enjoyed a good deal of sport at our expense since we left the city, and I am sorry to disappoint you by telling you that the disgusting, silly, precious fools who have annoyed you so much are brother and sister. As you go about lecturing people to be temperate, to be charitable, to be good, it might be well for you to work in a little talk now and then about being courteous to strangers. Advise people not to indulge in uncharitable and cutting remarks about those who may not be as well dressed as themselves, who may not have seen as much of the world, who may not be quite as well up in fashionable etiquette, and yet who are perhaps their superiors in other respects."

"You're talking now," said the brakeman, as he hustled by. The two were completely taken aback at Ben's little speech, and after recovering somewhat from their embarrassment they were profuse with apologies.

They would like to form the acquaintance, they said, of a young man who could be so courteous and attentive to his sister as to lead persons as well versed in human nature as they were to mistake the brother and sister for a young bride and groom. They would like at least to know his name.

Ben had no cards to give them, but he smiled and said his name was Persimmons.

CHAPTER XI.

Mrs. D., becoming tired of the "law's delay and the insolence of office," gave up all thought of recovering her stolen property in the South and returned home after a month's absence. She brought with her a half demented brother, one of those unfortunate, harmless creatures who possess a strong, healthy body, but a feeble, disjointed mind. Poor George had had no home since his own mother died. A pledge from a brother to take care of George and to furnish him a home had been forfeited. The money and property set aside for George's benefit had been squandered, and for some time he had been trying to make his way, kicked about and imposed upon, without a home and without friends. Mrs. D., though less able to do so than any of her brothers or sisters, made room for him in her own home.

The children soon learned to love Uncle George. He told them a great many stories about birds, animals, and insects; bees, trees, rocks, and flowers. He had never attended any school except the kindergarten of Dame Nature.

"Himself to Nature's heart so near,
That all her voices in his ear,
Of beast or bird, had meanings clear."

The children had many things to tell their mother about what had happened during her absence. Miss Sprightly, who had taught the Daisy Dell School the past two years and had been employed for the third year, had been compelled to give up the school on account of the

sickness of her mother. "And just think, mother," said Hez, "Carl Brown is the teacher now, and I don't like him one bit. Miss Sprightly used to come and sit down by me and talk to me about my lessons, and make it all so plain that I had no trouble to understand it, but Carl just stands up there and hollers at me, and the more he hollers the dumber I get."

Mrs. D. laughed, but Hez buried his face in her lap and began to cry. When he could talk he said, "Bennie hired me to go till you came home; and now you are home, and I don't have to stay hired any longer."

Perhaps my readers are as much surprised as Mrs. D. was to know that Carl was teaching at Daisy Dell, hence a word of explanation may be in order.

A new county superintendent had been elected that fall and Carl had done some good work electioneering for him, and to reward Carl the superintendent had given him a certificate to teach.

Carl's experience on the steamboat proved to be a wholesome lesson to him. He straightened up and went to work when he came home, and for a while he did pretty well, but he had not been trained to work on the farm when he was little, and he would not stick to it; he preferred to ride around in his road cart and help elect people to office. He had had some experience in canvassing as a book agent and as an agent for school furniture. He had also tried selling fruit trees, and for a time had run a wagon, peddling tinware and buying rags and old iron.

Dear boys, who are reading this story, it seems hard to think that a boy must have what seems to him a hard time of it when he is little, to be of much account when

he grows up, but it is true. I have lived to see a great many boys grow up to manhood, and if my observation is right, it is the little fellows who must tug and toil and sweat, while other boys are riding around on their ponies, that make the sturdy men; while the pony boys, the bicycle boys, the boys that seem to have a picnic every day, seldom amount to much as men.

When Miss Sprightly resigned the directors applied to the superintendent for a teacher. The superintendent replied that there were two young men in that part of the county who had certificates; one was young Benjamin D., the other was young Brown, a son of Deacon Brown. "I do not know anything about the first one named," said he, "except that my predecessor granted him a certificate. I do know Mr. Brown, however, and give it as my opinion that he will make a good teacher."

The superintendent immediately notified Carl of the vacancy and Carl and his father went at once to see about it. Carl showed the directors his certificate and reminded them that he was a graduate from a business college. Ben was talked about very favorably, and one of the directors was anxious to employ him, but Ben was away from home at the time, not having returned from his trip South, and, as Deacon Brown was intimately acquainted with the leading director, there was little difficulty in securing the place for Carl.

It is pitiful to see misfits anywhere, boys and girls, but the world is full of them. People are preaching who ought to be farming. Many are farming who would succeed better as mechanics. Some are teaching school for whom a kitchen or a shop would be a more fitting place. Doctors, lawyers, and editors get badly mixed up and

find themselves in each others' shoes and with each others' hats on. I used to read a little poem in one of the old school readers, each stanza of which ended with the lines—

"As round and round we run
Ever the right comes uppermost,
And ever is justice done."

I have wondered many times since, whether these lines are true or not. In the management of human affairs an extensive credit business seems to be carried on. Now and then settlement is made spot cash, but most of the acts of people, both good and bad, are booked for settlement in the future.

Carl was a misfit as a teacher. Mrs. D. and Ben were very much perplexed about it. The children had done so nicely with Miss Sprightly, and now to think that they were to waste their time, form wrong habits of study, and perhaps form a distaste for school and study altogether seemed too bad to be endured. They were in a quandary. I have many times noticed when people get into a quandary and do not know which way to turn, that an accident or something will happen which will clear up the dilemma and illuminate the way.

Carl's career as a teacher was short, and it came about in this way: Miss Sprightly had started a class in algebra, consisting of seven or eight of the largest boys and girls. Carl had never studied algebra, but thought he could teach the subject with little trouble by studying along ahead of the class. He tried it for a while and thought himself, and even made the pupils think, they were getting along very well, though it seemed odd enough

to him and them to add when they were subtracting and subtract when they were adding. They moved along page after page till the theorems were reached, then the path grew dimmer and dimmer, and finally they landed in a mathematical swamp.

While Ben and his mother were thinking and debating about what was the best to be done, Hez and his two little sisters, Maggie and Hattie, were allowed to remain out of school for a few days. One day Hez heard Ben remark to his mother that he did not think it worth while to send the children to school to Carl—that he would rather let them lose a whole year's schooling. This pleased Hez so well that he took it into his head to go down to the schoolhouse that evening, which was only half a mile away, and get his books. He thought the door might be locked, but that he could climb in at the window. So after supper he got his cap and slipped out the back way and went down to the schoolhouse. It was dark, but he did not feel much afraid, as Hector went with him. He did not try the door, but got a piece of rail and placed it up below the window, and climbing up he saw Mr. Brown, the teacher, inside. He seemed to be busy and Hez watched him.

This will remind my readers of a similar scene which occurred in the early part of this story, but it is well for us to remember that not only history but the incidents of life frequently repeat themselves. Hez saw the teacher go from desk to desk and take from each a book. The books looked alike and there were seven or eight of them. When he had gotten them together he opened the stove door and put them in. This almost made Hez cry, for he was afraid his books might be among them. He

hardly knew what to do; he felt scared lest Carl should see him and then catch him and whip him, for he had gotten already ten black marks for whispering at school, and according to a rule that Carl had made, a whipping was due him.

He slipped down quietly, whistled softly to Hector, and hurried back home. He came in looking excited and warm. "Where have you been, Hezzy?" said his mother. He drew a long breath and said: "Nowhere, much." His mother called him to her, and after a little while he told her where he had been and what he had seen. Ben had been to town that afternoon, and returning quite late, had seen Hez and Hector down near the schoolhouse, but supposed they had been to a neighbor's on an errand. They were greatly interested in Hez's recital of what he had seen, but thought it best to say nothing about it for a few days. "I was talking with Mr. Nelson this afternoon about the school," said Ben. "He told me he did not think that Carl could teach out the term, and wanted me to say I would take it in case Carl should be discharged."

"You, Bennie!" said his sisters. "I do wish you would," said Hez, "only I wish you wouldn't give black marks for whispering."

It was not long after the opening of school on the following morning till one of the girls of the algebra class raised her hand with the remark: "Teacher, my algebra is gone."

"Perhaps you took it home with you," said the teacher.

"No, sir. I am quite sure I left it in my desk."

"My algebra is gone, too," said another. "And mine,

too," said another and another until all the class declared their algebras were missing.

"That is very strange," said the teacher. "I cannot understand it." He then went to his desk and looked for his own algebra, but it was nowhere to be found. After frowning awhile, knitting his brows, and biting his lips, Carl said: "Children, I believe a dastardly, cowardly thing has been done. When I came to the schoolhouse this morning I found the door broken open, but I did not miss anything and I supposed some tramp had broken in and slept here. I noticed a fire had been started, but thought nothing of that. I believe now that the cowardly villain who broke the door lock has taken your algebras and burned them up. I will not mention any names, but, as some of you know, there is a young man in this neighborhood who wanted this school when I was employed, and I do not think he is any too good to do a thing of that sort for the purpose of throwing suspicion onto me. I regret this very much, for we had an important lesson today. Those theorems are very important. But since this is Friday, we will let the matter rest till Monday morning. I will consult the directors in the meantime as to what we had better do."

Some of the scholars looked angry, some looked confused, and some laughed.

After opening school on Monday morning, Carl said to the scholars that the disappearance of the algebras was still a great mystery to him, but he had thought the matter over, and as it would be quite expensive for them to buy new books, he had decided to put bookkeeping in the place of algebra. It would really be worth more to them than algebra, he said, although algebra was a very useful

and interesting study. He told the scholars he would furnish them all the paper and books they would need at his own expense. Thus bookkeeping was substituted for algebra at Daisy Dell, and as the parents had no books to buy, there was not much said about it.

Although it had been agreed that nothing should be said by any of the family about what Hez had seen, at least for a few days, Maggie told her little friend Grace Munson about it, Grace promising not to tell, of course; and Grace told Effie Nelson as a secret, and Effie told her mamma, and Mrs. Nelson told Mr. Nelson. Now, Mr. Nelson did not know it was a secret, and that was the way it got out. Mr. Nelson and another member of the board of directors came over to Mrs. D.'s to see about it. Hez told the story of his observations in such a straightforward, truthful way, that there was no doubting what he said. Hector was standing by and wagged his tail in approval. The result was that Carl was dismissed at the end of the week and Ben was asked to take charge of the school.

Ben said he did not like to do so under the circumstances; that Carl had intimated some things about him that some of the scholars might believe to be true, and that would make against him; but the directors assured Ben that nobody in the neighborhood believed otherwise than that Carl himself had destroyed the algebras; that he could not teach the subject, and saw no other way out of the difficulty; that such was their respect for Carl's parents that they preferred not to make any trouble about it.

They said they had already discharged Carl, and, needing a teacher, they were perfectly satisfied to employ

Ben. He then agreed to take the school the remaining three months of the term. On the morning of beginning he made a little talk to the scholars, in which he told them that he had never taught school and would very likely make some mistakes; that he was there to do them all the good he could; that if they would do their part he would try to do his; that he wanted to become acquainted with every one of them, and desired to be a personal friend to every one of them. He had only one rule to make and that was very short; it was "Do right."

Ben taught out the term to the perfect satisfaction of everybody; even Sam Berkshire said he was the best teacher they had ever had. He continued to work hard on the farm during the spring and summer and to teach at Daisy Dell during the winter for the two following years.

The payments on the farm had all been met and it was now paid for, and a more delightful home could not be found anywhere. Uncle George kept the lawn well mowed and cared for; he pruned and tied up the rose bushes, he took the garden under his special care, and actually loved every tree in the orchard. He could not plan very well, but he could work. Sunrise and sunset marked the day for him, and in it he never stopped working except for his meals or to watch now and then the doings of a bird, a bug, or a worm.

Ben was now twenty-three years old. He was still tall, but he was no longer slender; he had grown wide and big around, and weighed two hundred and thirty pounds. He had not lost sight of his other ambition—that of going to college. He had kept up a course of reading with the college in view, but as the time approached many barriers

placed themselves before him. He was past the age when most young men start to college. He would necessarily spend the savings of the family for the past few years, and perhaps more. His friends told him that it was of no use; that he already knew more of books than most men. Some said a college education would make him dissatisfied and unhappy.

One friend told him that he could not earn any more money after he graduated from college than he could now. Another told him that if he wanted to be a preacher, he need not go to college; that educated preachers were proud and stuck up, and that all he had to do was to open his mouth and the Lord would fill it with words. (Though Ben had conducted a Sunday school at Daisy Dell for the past three years, and everybody liked to hear him talk about the lessons, he did not think he would be a minister.) He liked agriculture and everything pertaining to it; he also liked to teach school.

He had experimented a little with the cultivation of small fruits. One very dry season he and the girls made a hundred dollars on about an eighth of an acre of strawberries simply by devising a plan to water them. This and other experiments led him to believe he might make a little fortune out of small fruits. He was devoted to his mother and sisters and thoroughly enjoyed being at home. Besides all this, the directors offered him seventy dollars a month to take the school again at Daisy Dell.

Would it not be foolish to throw away all these advantages, opportunities, and pleasures just to go to college? What did he want to go to college for, any way? Was it ambition to be elected some time to a high office? Nobody had ever patted him on the head and told him

he would be president some day or stand in the halls of congress or be governor of the state or anything of that sort. He never expected to be elected to office of any kind. Men who are elected to office, as a rule, are compelled to do things, to say things, and to promise things that were repulsive to Ben's nature. Did he wish to go to college that he might become a champion in the base ball nine or foot ball eleven and enjoy the glory of seeing his name in print, decorated by all that delightful lingo which fills the college column of the daily papers? That young men have gone to college to gratify this ambition, no one questions, but Ben was not that kind of a young man.

About this time Mr. White called. His two days' visit was a perpetual feast. He had graduated two years before and was now principal of a high school in a good town at a good salary.

There are times when we would give almost anything to talk with some one in whom we have confidence as to what we had best do. Mr. White's visit was timely, for it gave Ben just such an opportunity. He listened attentively to all the hindrances that came between Ben and college and then remarked:

"There are barriers to all the best things in the world. When gold was discovered in California, a long stretch of desert and two almost impassable ranges of mountains lay between the civilized people of the continent and the land of gold. The bones of animals and the graves of gold-seekers soon lined the trail that led from one to the other. You can live a happy and useful life if you never go to college, but I am satisfied you can live a happier and a far more useful life by going. After all," continued

Mr. White, "the best part of life is to live, and we are living, truly, while we are working out some noble and good purpose. In other words, we are living while we have something to live for, and the higher and more noble that something, the richer will be the life.

"That little robin that sits on her nest up in that tree has a purpose in her little breast. The man you call Uncle George says she has been sitting there for two weeks. In a few days her purpose will be realized. She has been starving herself all this time, but then she has been living. If we were as true to our reason as the robin to its instinct, many more of us would really and truly live. Your mother and sisters say the past five years have been happy years. You say they have been delightful years to you. Why? Because you have been working for a purpose, and that purpose has not been a selfish one. Your mother has that which, next to her family, is a woman's greatest earthly treasure—namely, a home, and a charming home it is, too, I must say. Now, if the promptings of your being, if the longing of your soul is to go to college, you ought to go; not to do so would be to pave the way for lifelong regret."

"If Hannah could only go, too," said Ben.

"I'll go," said Hannah, as she looked up from her sewing.

"Agreed, little ducky," said Ben.

"From kitchen to college," said Hannah. "That sounds romantic."

The little robin looked down from her nest and nodded her head.

Hector wagged his tail. Mrs. D. smiled and remarked: "It has been the great desire of my life,"—but

something in her throat prevented her finishing the sentence.

CHAPTER XII.

September found Ben and Hannah enrolled as students at the university. Ben was entered as a freshman, but it was necessary for Hannah to enter the preparatory department. She was willing to do this, however, and did not feel that somebody had a "spite at her" for putting her so low down. She knew how to work and had earned money enough in various ways, principally in Deacon Brown's kitchen, to pay her way at school for two years.

It was not so much for her own sake as for her brother's that she chose to make this use of her money. She knew there were times when Ben would need encouraging, and she would be right there to encourage him. She knew that good home victuals would go a long way toward keeping Ben's courage up, so rooms were rented and furnished plainly, provisions were brought from home largely, and Hannah established herself as housekeeper and student.

Ben soon found his place and took hold of his work vigorously. He attended strictly to his own business and did not have much to say to any one. This was all very well, but I think Ben overdid it. It is possible for a person to attend too strictly to his own business. We are all members of a community, and each one of us is a link in the community chain, and we suffer inconvenience and sometimes injustice when we try to be separate links, not attached to the other links of the chain.

I think Ben understood this, but he was shy and big and awkward and busy with his own affairs; and for a time he had no chum except Hannah. This was unfortunate. Before the end of the first term, however, Ben found a chum—a little, dwarfish fellow named Rigmy. The boys called him Pigmy, because he was so small. He was a good Latin student but had trouble with mathematics. It was just the opposite with Ben. They were attracted toward each other, I suppose, by the rule of opposites, as it is called—that Jack Sprat sort of law which ties together the long and the short, the fat and the lean, the handsome and the homely.

"I am afraid I am not going to carry geometry," said Rigmy to Ben one evening.

"I am sorry for you," said Ben.

"Yes, I believe you are, and I believe you are the only person at this university who is," said Rigmy. "The professors have no patience with me and no mercy on me."

"Well, come over to my room this evening and give me a lift on my Latin and I'll help you with the geometry," said Ben.

Such conversations as the above were of frequent occurrence between the two students, and Rigmy spent many evenings with Ben and his sister.

Poor Rigmy was "baching" his way through college, lodging in a small attic room, with little money and few friends.

By the way, boys and girls, if you live to be men and women, you will see many evidences that these two commodities friends and money increase and decrease in direct ratio. It seemed to Rigmy like an oasis in the desert to

spend an evening now and then with Ben and Hannah, and many were the luscious bellflowers and Ben Davises from the home orchard that Rigmy ate by their cozy fireside.

Thus their acquaintance ripened into friendship and Ben and Rigmy were frequently seen together. It was not only odd but amusing to see them walking along the street; Ben was so large and tall and Rigmy was so thin and short. Then, too, he had almost to run to keep up with Ben. The students called them Goliath and David, Jumbo and Tom Thumb, and similar names. This, of course, was annoying, but they tried to disregard it. Most of my readers know how hard this is to do.

One day at noon, while the students were filing into the dressing room, Ben and Rigmy were standing near the door discussing some question pertaining to their studies, when a waggish fellow placed himself in front of them and said: "Gentlemen, we have on exhibition today the far-famed white elephant of India and the only known specimen of the talking guinea pig."——He did not finish the sentence, for a blow from Ben's fist sent him sprawling to the floor. The student's gathered around, asking questions excitedly; the fellow picked himself up and said he would have Ben arrested, and explained to his associates that "the big lubber got mad at a little joke and struck me with his fist.

"Don't blame him"—"served you right"—was heard from those who saw it.

The next day Ben and the waggish fellow were called before the faculty. The wag was required to apologize to Ben and Rigmy and Ben was reprimanded for being so hasty. It was plain to him, however, that the faculty

did not blame him for striking the fellow. After this some of the students called Ben, Heenan (this was the name of a noted prize fighter).

"You must learn that you cannot fight your way through," said Hannah. "You remember I prevented your striking that man on the train, and just think how much better it turned out than if you had struck him."

"Yes, Hannah, but what would you do if everybody was everlastingly calling you names? I think that fellow needed knocking down, and I am not sorry I did it," said Ben.

"But it will only make matters worse, Bennie. I know it was contemptible, but you had to lower yourself to his level; you degraded your manhood, and for the moment the brute was uppermost."

"No, sister; I think you are mistaken. I did not get as low down as he did. I think the brute was on the floor; but you did not answer my question: what would you do if they were everlastingly calling you names?"

"I should pay no attention to it; I would appear rather to enjoy it."

"That is because you are a woman. If you had my fist you would not pretend to enjoy it."

"Oh, Bennie, Bennie, my noble brother must not talk in that way," said Hannah.

After thinking a moment Ben said: "I am sorry I ever came here. I wish I had made up my mind to be a farmer, without a college education. I do not think I shall come back next year."

"Oh, yes you will," said Hannah. "You are discouraged now. What would Mr. White think of such talk?"

"Oh," replied Ben impatiently, "he would say something about driftwood floating down stream, and the needle always pointing toward the pole, and tell that little story about Robert Bruce and the spider. I supposed at college young men acted like young men, and not like school children. I declare this college life reminds me of my school days at Hickory Hollow. Hannah, why is it that everybody wants to pick at me and call me names? I don't bother anybody. I attend to my own business, and yet I cannot turn a corner or walk along the street without hearing somebody say Jumbo, Heenan, Goliath, Persimmons."

"Does anybody here call you Persimmons?" said Hannah.

"Yes; I'll never get rid of that hateful name. Carl Brown has a cousin here, and I suppose he has written to him or told him to call me Persimmons."

The excellent quality of Ben's work and his manly deportment soon won the confidence and esteem of the president and all the instructors at the institution.

It was the custom for the two literary societies to have a contest each year at the close of the winter term. Ben had become a member of the P. Society, but had not furnished any exercises for it, simply because he had not been asked to do so. One part of the contest consisted of a debate. During Ben's second year at the university the P. Society was more anxious than usual to win the debate, but felt that no one in the society could cope with those who had been chosen from the other society. In their anxiety they appealed to the president of the institution.

"Does Mr. D. belong to your society?" asked the president.

"Yes," was the reply; "but do you think he would do?"

"Judging from the character of his work and the earnestness of the fellow, I should not hesitate to try him," said the president.

"But, pardon me, professor; you know he is big and awkward and has been a sort of laughing stock among the students—that is, some of them; would not that make against us?"

"I have observed," said the president, thoughtfully, "something of the unkind treatment of the students toward him, and his delivery may not be the most graceful, but what you want is sledge-hammer argument; that is what will count with your judges." The result was that at a meeting of the society Ben was chosen to lead the debate. He blushed and puckered his mouth when he was notified of the fact, but after talking it over with Hannah he concluded to accept. As soon as the other society heard of it they held a meeting to rejoice over their victory before it was won.

Within the next few days Ben received numerous little reminders of the ridicule that was in store for him; first, a stuffed toy elephant, then a bottle of soothing syrup, then a cartoon of a portly toad making a speech to an audience of toads. This was followed by a picture of David beheading Goliath, a box of persimmons, and several caricatures of prize fighters; valentines in all imaginable forms of ugliness; finally a stretcher with a fat man on it bandaged and poulticed as if he had fallen among

thieves; and, meanest of all, a picture of a beer keg with a man's head and legs attached to it.

Ben felt demoralized and disgraced at all this, and more than once almost decided to pack up and go home, and would probably have done so had it not been for Hannah. He did not know that his antagonist had his room decorated with just such mementoes, or "scalps," as the students called them. He did not know that it was the custom of the institution for the societies to outdo each other, if possible, in sending these trophies to the contestants, but felt that he had been singled out by the students as an intruder, and that it was their purpose to bury him under a deluge of odium and ridicule. As intimated above, that was because he did not talk to the boys enough. He did not make himself one of them. Soon after the arrival of the beer keg, Hannah found him one evening seated by the table where all these things were piled up, crying. My readers may smile at the idea of a man twenty-five years old, six feet two inches tall, and weighing two hundred thirty-two pounds, crying. The idea is, indeed, smilable.

"Why, Bennie, what is the matter?" said Hannah, in suppressed breath; "is there bad news from home?"

"No," said Ben, when he could talk without blubbering, "but just look at that," holding up the beer keg; "an insinuation that because I am fleshy I am a beer-guzzler! I will not stand it. I am going home."

"No, Ben," said Hannah, putting down her foot, "you are not going home. I am satisfied that no such meaning is intended. It is only a joke. The students have found that they can annoy you in this way, and if you would tell the boys how kindly you have been remembered of

late and laugh about it, it would be much better than to cry about it. I am sure they will quit it as soon as the contest is over. The truth is, Bennie, you are altogether too sensitive. You look at these things through green goggles. They are not intended as you think they are at all. What evidence have you that anybody here thinks you a beer-drinker except that comical picture? None, whatever. If you expect ever to be a man, you must rid yourself of the habit of drawing such unwarranted conclusions."

"I wish I had some of your grit, Hannah," said Ben.

"I do, too," said Hannah, "for I feel provoked at your pettishness."

About a week before the contest a large delegation of the society called to see Ben's scalps, and they laughed heartily when they saw the array. He felt wonderfully cheered up when he learned that what had worried him so much was a custom of the institution and just what he might expect by virtue of being a contestant. "If you don't want them," said one of the company, "all you have to do is to lose the debate; then, according to the code, you will be expected to turn them all over to your opponent; on the other hand, if you win, you will get all of his. You will then have enough to start a dime museum."

The trophies kept coming till the evening of the contest, but Ben had changed his goggles and they did not annoy him.

The question for debate pertained to Maximilian and Mexico. Ben had thoroughly studied the subject and knew he had the side that ought to win. His opening speech was somewhat disappointing. His antagonist fol-

IN TRUE PATRICK HENRY STYLE.

lowed with some humorous remarks about the avoirdupois of the previous speaker and the light weight of the speech. He then made a pretty speech, but made some statements which were not in accordance with the facts of history. He was loudly applauded, however, and sat down.

Ben followed, and after correcting the misstatements that had been made, he proceeded to demolish the arguments of his opponent and to establish arguments of his own in such a logical, clear, and convincing way that there was no doubt in the minds of any one as to the outcome. He closed with a fine peroration referring to the relations existing between Mexico and the United States. This was given in true Patrick Henry style.

The decision of the judges was unanimous in favor of Ben. The P. Society were wild with excitement, and after the congratulations they procured a stretcher, placed Ben upon it, and required the other society to carry him in front of a long procession, which marched through the principal streets of the town and finally to the university again, where a banquet had been prepared in his honor. The ride on the stretcher reminded Ben of his ride on the rail at Hickory Hollow, but his feelings were far different.

It may be of interest to state that Ben's opponent in the debate was the waggish fellow whom he had floored once before. The next day the "scalps" of the defeated party were all piled on the stretcher and delivered to Ben, according to custom.

The tempestuous period in Ben's college career was now about ended. He was no longer greeted as Jumbo, or Heenan, or Persimmons.

The junior and senior years were full of interest to

Ben and Hannah, and many things occurred which I would like to tell my young readers about, but I am admonished that I must not make this story longer than the school year. One little incident, however, I must not omit. The summer vacations were passed at work on the farm. One warm day in the latter part of August, as Ben was returning home from town, he was compelled to turn out of the road for a wagon loaded with wheat which had broken down. The driver was evidently in trouble. The tire had run off from one wheel and the wheel had collapsed.

"In trouble, neighbor?" asked Ben. When the man looked up Ben saw that it was Pete Small. Ben laid aside his coat and insisted upon transferring the wheat to his own wagon. He and Small had not met for some time and they were glad to see each other, but Small was evidently the gladder of the two. There was not much time for ceremony, and Ben's offer was accepted. The next day, when Small returned the wagon, he took from his pocket a five-dollar bill and handed it to Ben. Ben said he did not want any pay for the use of the wagon.

"That is all right," said Small. "You keep it. I owe you a little bill for helping me thresh one time, that I had forgotten to pay; and besides, I want to pay you something for helping me out yesterday."

Ben smiled, puckered his mouth, handed Small two dollars, and put the bill in his pocket, refusing to take more. Thus he collected the money so hardly earned ten years before, and out of which he thought he had been defrauded.

With the earnest hope that my readers have all experienced as much pleasure in reading this story as I have

in writing it, I must now drop off the drapery of fiction and bring it to a close.

Carl Brown is now living in town, a loafer, hunter, politician, and trader. His father deeded him three hundred acres of land in such a way that he cannot sell it. He says he is sure of a living, whether he works or not.

Dick Snyder is serving a second term in the state penitentiary.

The last I heard from Ed Duncan he was keeping a saloon in a little town in southern Illinois.

Mrs. D., Uncle George, Hez, and one of the girls still reside on the farm that Ben bought.

Hannah is the wife of Mr. White. That gentleman recorded his first favorable impressions of her during his occasional calls upon Miss Maggie Brown. The affected culture, artificial music, and parlor manners of Miss Brown were never so attractive to him as the natural womanly grace of the little girl who assisted Mrs. Brown in the kitchen. He would dismiss her, however, from his mind with a sigh and the thought that her mind would probably never reach beyond the round of domestic duties that cluster about the kitchen, and that she would be out of place as the wife of an educated man. When the little conference on the veranda occurred in which Ben, Mr. White, Hannah, and the Robin took part, Mr. White experienced a thrill of delight when Hannah decided to go to college.

As for Ben, after graduating with the highest honors of the class, he was elected principal of the preparatory department of the institution, at a salary of twelve hundred dollars a year. Three years later he resigned for the purpose of traveling in Europe and studying at one

of the German universities. On his return he was elected to a professorship in one of the best colleges in the state.

No story is complete, as no life is complete, without its love chapter. I will give only the head lines of Ben's love chapter, that the reader may know it was not omitted in his life, though not given in the story.

Enjoying a pleasant heart to heart talk with him in his room one day, the writer remarked: "Ben, you have completed your education; you have a good position at a good salary; what you need now is a good wife."

He became more serious and confidential and admitted that he thought it was true. Although Prof. D. had many friends and admirers among the young ladies, and had not been neglectful of his duties in their behalf, he seemed not to have met the right one.

"You see, Ben," said I, after some talk about ideal wives, "a man cannot marry his mother or sister, and the next best thing to do is to find some one as nearly like her as possible."

Ben admitted that that was what he had been looking for.

"Are you acquainted with Miss H.?" said I.

"No; I know who she is; I have seen her, but have never met her."

"In my opinion she would make you a capital wife. She is a cultured lady, of fine appearance, and a lady of excellent character."

"But she is, —— you are, —— I am ——."

"No," said I catching his idea, "you would not be interfering with my plans in the least, and if you say so I shall be pleased to introduce her to you."

"I am sorry I am not better looking, but I shall be

HIS HOME IS ONE OF THE HAPPIEST

pleased to have an introduction to the lady," was Ben's closing remark, as he glanced at a mirror hanging on the wall.

Soon afterward an occasion was planned to happen, and I performed my part according to agreement.

In a few days I left the city to accept a position in a distant part of the state. A year and a half later I received a card of invitation to attend the wedding of Miss H. and Prof. D.

For some years past the hero of our little story has been president of a flourishing college. He has the professional right, when he sees fit to use it, to place several capital D's and other big letters after his name. He is a frequent contributor to the leading magazines and a lecturer of wide reputation. His home is one of the happiest, and I have never heard his statement disputed, that no man living has a better wife.

Hosts of young men and women whom he has helped over the shoals which lie between boyhood and girlhood on one side, and manhood and womanhood on the other, rise up to call him blessed.

DAISIE AND ESTHER

AN EASTER STORY.

Uncle David and Aunt Lucretia, his wife, owned an acre of land near the outer edge of town.

They lived in a small house. They kept a cow, a few chickens, a dog and a cat. The cow's name was Bess. The dog's name was Trusty. The cat's name was Pattie. The chickens also had names. One hen was named Speck, another Crooked-Toe, another Greedy, another one Sly. She was named Sly because she was so sly about hiding her nest, that sometimes Aunt Lucretia could not find it at all, and by and by Sly would come up with a fine brood of little chicks, all her own. The old rooster's name was Bugle.

Uncle David cultivated a fine garden and sold vegetables. There was also a pretty little front yard with green grass and a few beds or rows of nice flowers. The little low porch in front of the house was covered with morning glory vines in the summer time.

Uncle David and Aunt Lucretia had two noble sons, but they were both killed in the war. They also had one daughter who, when she grew to womanhood, was married to a man who went to live in Texas. She died a few years afterward, leaving a little daughter named Daisie. The old people felt very sad when their last child and only daughter died, and they wanted Daisie, their little granddaughter, to come and live with them.

After a good deal of trouble with Daisie's father about it, one day a cab stopped in front of the house and there was Daisie with a card tied to her arm and a little purse with a little money in it fastened to her dress. She had traveled all the way from San Antonio by herself. It was a very long journey for a little girl only four years old, but the trainmen and the passengers were all very kind to her. When the train reached the town where Uncle David and Aunt Lucretia lived the conductor took Daisie in his arms, placed her in the cab, kissed her good-bye and paid the cab fare, telling the driver just where to go, for he had read it on the card.

I cannot tell you how glad Uncle David and Aunt Lucretia were to see Daisie. They had never seen her, had not even seen her picture. She was a dear little girl, with large blue eyes and light, curly hair. She brought sunshine into the home of this old couple. She soon got acquainted and was as happy as a lark in her new home. Sometimes she helped Uncle David plant things in the garden, and would ask him all manner of questions about worms and bugs and how things grow from such tiny little seeds. Uncle David would stop and explain it all to her and then he would say, "I declare, Daisie, if we don't work more and talk less we'll not get our cucumbers planted before Easter, and if we don't, they will all go to vine and we shall have no cucumbers, or only little bits of ones, that look more like eggs than cucumbers." Then she would go with Aunt Lucretia to set the hens and would ask all manner of questions about how eggs turn to little chickens and what the old mother hen was saying when she clucked and said cur-r-r-r. Then Daisie's grandma would explain it all but keep on working, fixing the

nests and putting thirteen eggs under each hen, for Aunt Lucretia could work and talk too. "We must get the hens all to setting before Easter," she would say, "for Easter belongs to the moon, and if hens are not set at the right time in the moon, the eggs will not hatch." Then Aunt Lucretia told Daisie all about Easter and how, on Easter morning, nests could be found, here and there in hidden places, with eggs of different colors—red, blue, green and yellow—where the rabbits must have put them. "Don't see how else they could get there," said Aunt Lucretia.

Daisie became so interested in all this that she could hardly wait for Easter to come so that she might look for the rabbits' nests. The night before Easter, as Daisie lay on her little couch looking out of the window at the moon, she could not help wondering what it could have to do with Easter and with making things grow right or wrong, causing eggs to hatch or not to hatch, and more puzzling than all the rest, what it had to do with rabbits and colored eggs. While she was wondering about all this she heard her grandma and grandpa laughing and talking low in the kitchen. To satisfy her curiosity she got up and slipped quietly to the kitchen door. Peeping through the partly open door she saw eggs of different colors. Then she felt guilty because she had been peeking and went stealthily back to bed. Early the next morning—Easter morning—grandpa called Daisie to get up and help him hunt for rabbits' nests. She lost no time in doing so and what a fine time they had looking for the nests—in the fresh green grass, under the porch and behind the rosebush. When grandpa thought they had found all the eggs Daisie surprised him by saying, "Grandpa, I just believe you was the rabbit that put the eggs in the nests." Just then

Trusty, who had been romping and smelling all around, helping to find Easter eggs, stopped at the roots of the lilac bush and began to bark. Grandpa and Daisie both ran to see what was there, but Daisie outran grandpa and got there first. Daisie thought sure she would find a rabbit there with another nest of Easter eggs, but no, there sat old Sly on a nest nearly covered up with leaves. When grandpa saw it he called grandma, who had been standing on the porch watching the fun. When grandma came and lifted old Sly off the nest what do you suppose she found? Eggs? No. A rabbit? No. She found twelve fluffy, downy little chicks, some white, some black, some brown. Grandma said it was good luck, because they hatched out on Easter morning. Daisie said, "Old Sly, how did you know the time of the moon to set yourself?" Old Sly said, cut, cut, cur-r-r-r. Grandma said Daisie could have old Sly and her brood of chicks for her own. She might feed them and coop them at night and when they grew large she might sell them if she wished to do so.

How delighted Daisie was! All summer, with the garden, the cow, the chickens, the flowers—the going to market and the little home duties—grandpa, grandma and Daisie were as happy as the summer days were long. Daisie took such good care of Sly and her chickens that every one of them lived and by fall they were fine large chickens "worth five dollars," the grocer-man said. Daisie began to plan as to how she would sell them and buy a nice Christmas present for grandpa and grandma.

And now, children, I come to the saddest part of this story. I would omit it if I could, but as this is a truly, true-to-life story, I do not see how I can leave it out.

Daisie had lived with her grandma and grandpa two years. She was six years old and had started to school in September. One evening she came home from school with a sore throat. At night grandma tied her stocking around it and rubbed it with goose oil and did many other things good for a sore throat but Daisie's throat became worse. The doctor was called and he said Daisie had diphtheria.

This made her grandpa and grandma feel very sad indeed. They were afraid that Daisie would die, but she had the best of treatment and after a long time she got well. Then her papa came to see her one day early in the spring. After visiting with Uncle David and Aunt Lucretia a few days he said he must return to his home in Texas and that he must take Daisie with him, for Daisie had a new mother now in Texas and he could not think of leaving her there where she might get the diphtheria again. It was a sad day for poor old Uncle David and Aunt Lucretia when Daisie bade them good-bye and went away with her father. It seemed very lonely without Daisie. The house seemed so still. Trusty looked everywhere for Daisie and whined when he could not find her. He would go and lie down by the chicken house door as if he thought she would surely come to feed the chickens and then he would find her. He refused to eat anything for several days. Uncle David called him one morning but he did not come; he looked everywhere for him but he could not find him. One of Daisie's little dresses that had been left hanging under the back porch was gone too. Uncle David thought that Trusty had taken the little dress and was trying to find Daisie. He inquired all about town of everybody he met for Trusty. "Have you seen anything of my dog, Trusty," he would say. He

kept asking this question so much that "Have you seen my dog, Trusty," became a sort of byword about the town. What became of Trusty nobody ever knew. The little dress was found some time after, on the bank of the river several miles away. It was thought that Trusty tried to swim the river in his search for Daisie and perhaps was drowned.

Uncle David acted so strangely that some people thought he was losing his mind. I believe you will almost think so too when I tell you what happened on Easter morning.

The night before Easter, Uncle David insisted that Aunt Lucretia should color some eggs and hide them in the grass and among the bushes and let him find them on Easter morning as he and Daisie had done the year before. "Why, David," said Aunt Lucretia, "I do believe you are getting childish." Uncle David laughed until he cried and said it was more fun than anything, declaring that if she would not color the eggs and let him find them he would color them himself and hide them for her to find. So to please him she colored the eggs and was preparing to hide them on Easter morning, Uncle David rubbing his hands and chuckling meanwhile. Aunt Lucretia declared she heard a noise on the front porch. "I don't hear anything, Lucretia," said Uncle David. "Well, I do," said Aunt Lucretia. "It sounds like a little puppy or a little pig or something." As she said this she set down the basket of eggs and started to see what it was that made the noise. When she opened the door, she threw up her hands and started back, for there was a basket on the porch with something in it covered up—something alive, whining and kicking around. "David, do come here quick," she

said. "What," called Uncle David from the kitchen, "has Trusty come back?" "If it is Trusty, I'll just hug him," he said as he hurried to the front door.

But it was not Trusty. By the time Uncle David reached the door, Aunt Lucretia had the basket partly uncovered. "A baby," said Uncle David. "An Easter baby. That beats the moon and colored eggs and rabbits and all the rest." "What else is that?" said the old man as Aunt Lucretia removed a smaller basket from the end of the larger one. "Is it twins?" "Mercy no, it's a pup!" said the old lady as she removed the cover and a little puppy hopped out and began frisking around on the porch.

"By the holy——," said Uncle David. "Why, David, you will swear pretty soon if you are not careful," said Aunt Lucretia. "O, no, I wasn't going to swear, I was about to shout," said the old man. "A baby and a pup, hurrah!" As he said this, he caught the pup in his arms and hugged him to his breast. The pup licked the old man's face and seemed overjoyed at the meeting. "It is mighty good luck, because it is Easter," said Aunt Lucretia. "I expect they are both nearly starved, here David, you hold the baby while I go and warm some milk for them." Uncle David sat in the big old-fashioned rocker with the baby on one arm and the pup on the other and began to sing, "Rock-aby baby in the tree top," while Aunt Lucretia hurried away to warm the milk. Soon she returned and as the milk seemed a little too warm she began to blow a spoonful of it before offering it to the baby. "Let me blow it, Lucretia," said Uncle David, "I can blow harder than you can." As he said this he gave a tremendous blow and blew the milk all out of the spoon. Some of it fell on the baby's neck which made the

baby chuckle. Uncle David chuckled, too, and the pup began to bark. "They are lively little critters anyhow," said he. After the two were fed a hearty meal of rich new milk, they cuddled together in the basket for a nap and the two old people began to rack their brains trying to imagine where they came from and how and when. Uncle David remarked solemnly: "I knew something was going to happen for the moon looked so queer and then I dreamed ——"

"What is this?" said Aunt Lucretia, as she took hold of a little ribbon tied around the baby's wrist from the end of which dangled a gold ring. After much surmising the two old people got their glasses to examine the ring. There seemed to be some letters on the inside of the ring, but neither of them could make out what they were, even with the aid of their spectacles. "Let me have your specks," said the old lady and with the aid of both pairs of glasses she slowly spelled E-s-t-h-e-r. "Easter," exclaimed Uncle David. "Her name is Easter." "Easter what?" said Aunt Lucretia. "Easter Sunday," said Uncle David. So that became the baby's name. The dog was named Babe Bernard. News of what had happened at the little home of these two old people soon spread through the village and a great many people came to see the two little waifs, everybody wondering from where and how and when they came. Several kind ladies offered to relieve the old people of the burden of taking care of the baby. Many more seemed to think more of the dog; he was so cute and sweet they said. "No, indeed, we'll not part with them," said Aunt Lucretia. "It was a Providence, and on Easter morning, too." "Amen to that," said Uncle David.

Easter soon grew to be a beautiful little girl with large

brown eyes and long curly hair. Babe grew just as rapidly and soon became a fine large dog. The two were constant playmates and such times as they did have romping and playing together. Easter soon learned to love grandma and grandpa. She was a busy little helper in planting things in the garden, in feeding the chickens, and in many ways she cheered the otherwise lonely lives of the two old people. When she was old enough she and Babe would frequently go to the market together carrying baskets of eggs and vegetables from the garden. Sometimes two baskets would be sent—Babe carrying one in his mouth and Easter carrying the other.

I have spoken of Easter's curly hair. It was so curly and kinky that grandma had a hard time combing it. Sometimes Easter would cry, but grandma would tell her she must not cry, she must have grit and not cry even if it did hurt. One day when Easter and Babe had been playing hide-and-go-seek together and becoming tired had come and sat down to rest on the back porch, grandma heard Babe howling and whining as if in great distress. She went to see what could be the matter, and what do you suppose she saw? Easter had the comb tangled in the long woolly hair of Babe's head and was pulling with both hands as hard as she could pull, and poor Babe was howling and crying and begging her as well as he could to stop. "Why, Easter," said grandma, "what are you doing. You must not treat Babe in that way, that is cruel, besides he may bite you." "Well, grandma, I want him to have grit, that is why I am pulling his hair."

I could tell you many more amusing incidents of Easter and Babe, but I am afraid it would make this story too long.

One Easter morning when Esther and Babe were about seven years old, while Easter and grandpa were looking for rabbits' nests a strange man called at the house. First he asked for a drink of water, then he asked if he might stop and rest awhile on the porch, but he could hardly take his eyes away from Esther and Babe. Soon breakfast was ready and grandma invited the man to breakfast. He consented, but all the time kept looking at Esther, and once he took his handkerchief and wiping his eyes looked far away. While they still sat at the breakfast table the man said to grandpa and grandma: "Did you find a basket on your front porch seven years ago." The two old people were startled at this question, for they suspected at once that the man was Esther's father. "Did the basket contain a little child and a little dog?" continued the man. "And was there a ring tied by a ribbon to the baby's wrist? And were the letters E-s-t-h-e-r engraved on the ring? Is this the little girl? And is that fine St. Bernard the same dog?" Grandma and grandpa were too much overcome with surprise and a sort of sad foreboding to make any reply. Esther only looked in a strange way at the man with her large brown eyes. "How much she resembles her mother," said the man, and then he wiped his eyes again. "I will tell you how it all happened," said he. "Esther's mother died and left me and the baby alone. Some people wanted Esther very much, but I wanted her to have a good home where she would be kindly treated. I heard of you and how sad you were when Daisie was taken away, so I came a long way to bring her to you. I heard, too, how you had lost your dog, 'Trusty,' so I brought the little puppy in the basket with Esther. My home is in California. I was a poor

man, then, but now I am wealthy, and as Esther is my daughter, I have come to take her to California with me. I have a fine home, with beautiful flowers all the year round. I will buy Esther a pony to ride and will get for her many nice dresses and other nice things. I will also get for her a fine piano that she may learn to play music. I will send her to school and furnish her all the nice books she wants; in fact, whatever she wants she may have." This all sounded very charming to Esther, and although she was only a little girl seven and a half years old, she looked very thoughtful. Her attention was attracted by the chickens making a noise in the yard and Babe scratching at the back door and barking, trying to get in. "I must go and feed Babe and the cat and the chickens," said Esther, gathering up the scraps from the table. The man went with her and grandpa and grandma hobbled in silence to the back porch, where they sat sadly looking on while Esther fed Babe and the rest of her family. The man was much amused to see a big rooster hop onto her shoulder and to see the other fowls eating from her hand. Then he began to tell her more about the fine home in California.

"We will start back today," he said. Just then the rooster began to crow "Cuk-uk-uck-a do-oo-oo—we can't spare E-e-e-ster." That was what he crowed. Then the cat said "M-e-ow-ow-ow—we can't spare E-e-e-ster." Babe began to snarl and growl "r-r-r-r-wow, wow, wow. You can't separate me and Easter," and he growled and showed his teeth as if he would bite the man. Then grandma covered her face with her apron and began "Boo-hoo, hoo, hoo-oo-oo. We can't live without Easter." Then grand-

ESTHER FEEDING BABE AND THE REST OF HER FAMILY.

pa covered his face with his hands and said "Bo-ho-ho-o-o-o-o-o. We can't get along without E-e-e-e-ster."

All this noise and blubber surprised the man very much. When it was quiet enough for him to be heard he said: "While I should like very much for Esther to go with me, I do not want her to go unless she is willing to do so." Then he spoke again about the pony, the piano, the nice home and the nice dresses, and Esther thought she would like very much to go. The man said he could not wait very long as he wanted to go on the next train. Grandma hobbled around to get what few things Esther had together while grandpa sat on the step of the back porch leaning on his cane and shaking his head and moaning. Esther's clothes were all tied up in a bundle and the man said: "Now Esther, tell the folks good-bye, for we must be going." Esther went to Babe and put her arms around his neck, but her eyes were full of tears and she could not say "good-bye." Babe licked her face and growled again at the man. She then went to grandma, put her arms around her neck and kissed the poor old wrinkled face; then she went to grandpa and hugged and kissed him, then she stood still and thoughtful for a full minute. The man began to tell the old people how thankful he was to them for their kindness to Esther. As he did so he stepped to the table and placed on it one hundred dollars in gold. Then Esther said, "Good-bye, papa; you may go back to California. I cannot leave grandma and grandpa and Babe. The pony, the piano, the flowers and the home would all be nice, and you seem to be nice, too, but grandpa and grandma were kind to me when Babe and I had no home except a basket and no friends at all. I am very happy here and here is where I want to stay."

The man seemed very much disappointed but he started to go. "Don't you want the money?" said grandma. "Oh no," said the man. "You may have that for your kindness to Esther."

Two years after this, on Easter Sunday, grandma died. Grandpa hobbled around all day leaning on his cane and searching everywhere for rabbits' nests and Easter eggs. People said he had lost his mind. They took him to the infirmary the next day.

Now Esther and Babe were left all alone. But her father in California soon heard of it and came and took both Esther and Babe to the lovely home in California.

MEMORIAL DAY

A LETTER TO THE SMALLER BOYS AND GIRLS.

Dear Children—We call the thirtieth of May Memorial Day. I wonder if you all know what it means. Of course you all know that we have speeches and songs and that we decorate the schoolroom with flowers. We put on our best clothes and our best manners and invite our parents and friends to come and hear our exercises, we feel glad and we have a happy time, but I wonder, after all, if we know what it means.

It is probable that in the afternoon all the people of the town and many from the country will assemble in the park. They will listen to band music and speeches. They will sing songs and perhaps tell stories. At one end of the large platform will be seated a few grayhaired, graybearded men, dressed in suits of faded blue, each wearing a badge. At the other end will be a company of girls dressed in white, each with a basket of flowers or a wreath in her hand. Very likely there will also be a company of young men all dressed alike and each holding a gun.

After the exercises are over they will all march to the cemetery, the old men leading the way. The flowers will be placed upon graves that have been marked with little flags, the young men will fire off their guns and Memorial Day will be over. What does it mean? I will tell you a story that will explain it.

Our nation may be compared to a family of children.

You have learned that there are forty-eight stars on the flag. There are now forty-eight children in our national family, so each child has one star on the flag. These children live with their Uncle Samuel and Aunt Columbia in the most beautiful country in the world. A long time ago, when there were not so many children in the family as now, and not so many stars on the flag as now, this family of children lived very happily together. Each one had a garden or a small farm of his own and was kept busy cultivating it. One of the girls—her name was Flora—raised nothing but flowers in her garden. She frequently made large bouquets of flowers and sent them to her sisters and to her uncle and aunt. Some of the others raised fruits of all kinds, others cultivated orchards. Some of the boys raised corn, others took delight in pigs and poultry and put in their time in caring for them. Of course, as is the case now, some were too lazy to work very much, and allowed their gardens to grow up in weeds. One of the boys—his name was Cala—had a rocky, rough piece of ground that was supposed to be worthless. Aside from some wild fruits which grew upon it without cultivation, it did not produce much, and Cala was discouraged. But one day, while digging among the rocks, he struck a rich vein of gold, so his farm, which was thought to be worthless, turned out to be the richest of all.

Allie found that her garden would grow fine cotton, so she supplied all her brothers and sisters with enough cotton to make all their clothes. Her sister Louie, whose garden was near Allie's cultivated sugar cane and furnished the whole family and several of the neighbors with sugar. One of the girls—her name was Virginia—planted all her garden in—what do you suppose? You will be

surprised when I tell you that she planted it in *tobacco,* not that she wanted to smoke or chew the tobacco herself, but she wanted to sell it to the boys—especially to her cousins who lived in another country. In this way she became quite wealthy.

One day a man came along driving a team of goats and leading several others. They were fine, large goats, unlike any Virginia had ever seen, for they were all black. The man said they were African goats. He persuaded Virginia to buy some of the goats, telling her that she could harness them up and train them to work in her garden. Virginia liked this idea very much, for, as she readily saw, she could then raise a larger quantity of tobacco and get more money, besides she would not have to work so hard herself. She found that what the man had said about the goats was true, for she could harness them to a plow or a wagon and make them do a great deal of work. After this, several of the boys and girls bought African goats to do their work for them and everything went well for awhile. After awhile, however, the goats became a source of trouble. Sometimes they would run away and get into the fields of the other boys and girls, where they were not wanted; at other times they would refuse to work and many stories were told of cruel treatment of the goats. Some of the boys thought it was not right to keep goats and make them work; others were accused of stealing the goats and hiding them, or taking them to a far-away country and turning them loose. So the brothers and sisters began to quarrel about the goats; they began to make faces at each other and to call each other bad names. This caused Uncle Samuel a great deal of trouble. He tried to reason with them, but it seemed

to do no good. At one time he had it in his mind to buy all the goats and take them back to Africa and give them their freedom, but he did not have money enough, and when he asked the children to help furnish the money they became angry, and said that while they loved Uncle Samuel and Aunt Columbia very much, they did not think it fair for them to furnish money for the purpose of freeing the goats; besides the owners of the goats were not willing to give them up. To make matters worse some of the boys who owned farms in the northern part of the country found that the goats were useful in raising corn as well as tobacco and wanted to use them for this purpose. Uncle Samuel objected to this, for he began to see that the more goats there were the more trouble there would be. Finally, to pacify matters, Uncle Samuel built a fence from east to west across the country. It took some time to build it, but when it was completed he said, "Now, children, all who play on the south side of this fence may keep African goats, but all who play on the north side of the fence must not." This plan worked pretty well for a while and then other troubles arose and the children began to quarrel worse than ever. They made faces at each other and called bad names and dared each other to fight. Uncle Samuel tried to make them feel ashamed of themselves, but all he could do did not stop the quarreling.

About this time one of the girls—her name was Caroline—proposed to several of her brothers and sisters that they take their goats and all else that belonged to them and leave home and go to a place farther south, where it was sunny and bright, and where they could live in peace. This was agreed to and they made preparations to go, but before starting, as I have been told, they stole a quantity

of jewelry and other valuable trinkets and keepsakes that belonged to their Aunt Columbia, who had been so kind to them. Then Uncle Samuel interfered and said, "No, children, you shall not go; besides, you must bring back the treasure that you have taken."

Caroline was a beautiful child, but many people thought that she had been humored too much and was spoiled. I am sorry to tell you that she was very saucy to her aunt and uncle, and actually tore up a pretty red, white and blue apron that her aunt had given her for a birthday present. Some of the children did not think that Caroline and her friends were in earnest about leaving home, but they were mistaken, for one morning they began to pack up and then everybody knew they were in earnest. Uncle Samuel saw them starting and called to them to come back, but they would not obey him. He then called to the strongest and bravest of the boys to go and overtake the fugitives and bring them home.

"What if they fight us?" said the brave boys. "Then you must fight, too," was the reply. I am sorry to say that a terrible fight was the result. One boy that you no doubt have heard of—his name was Illini—was in the fight and was quite badly hurt. He was a noble boy and did not want to fight, but he thought his uncle was in the right and he said he would rather die than disobey his uncle and aunt. It was a sad sight to see brothers and sisters fighting. Columbia's heart was wrung with grief and Uncle Samuel shed bitter tears as he looked on the shameful spectacle.

By and by Caroline and those who sided with her had to acknowledge themselves whipped. Uncle Samuel asked them if they would come back home and be good children,

and they said they would. This ended the trouble. I have been told that the goats all ran away during the fight and their owners never saw them any more.

Columbia washed up the children, put clean clothes on them, and made them a feast. At the feast they all agreed to forget their quarrels and to bury their grudges and their hatred of each other. Caroline pouted a little while, but soon she, too, was as happy and cheery as any of the children.

In memory of the feast and the good promises they made to their uncle and aunt and to each other they built a monument of flowers and called it the Monument of Peace. The day of the feast was the thirtieth of May, and this day has been celebrated ever since as *Memorial Day*.

MY PET ANTELOPE

A VACATION STORY.

The last day of school had come at last. The afternoon was to be devoted to *exercises*. The noon hour was prolonged to twice the usual length, partly to give the mothers time to do up the dinner things and get ready and get the little boy brothers and girl sisters ready that they too might see and hear and be seen and heard, partly to give the performers time to dress themselves up in their Sunday clothes for the occasion, and partly to allow Tom Tatters and the other boys who had no Sunday clothes to dress up in to enjoy an extra game of ball.

The pieces were all well recited. Nobody forgot except Joe Long, and he would not have forgotten only while he was speaking, "You'd scarce expect one of my age," etc., Mrs. Meddler's little two-years-old Ruth got hold of an ink bottle and drank part of the ink and spilled the rest over her chin and white apron. The horrid face she made caused Joe to laugh and forget his piece. The farewell composition read by Lucretia Wealthy made some of the children cry, but some of the other large girls said that her mother wrote it for her and that it was nothing to cry about. A special invitation had been sent to the members of the school board but none of them were there. Good old Deacon Chestnut was the guest of honor and he made a few remarks at the close in which he praised all

the exercises and said he would not be surprised if some of those boys would stand in the halls of congress some day —may be one of them might be president of the United States. The boys all looked at Pat Flynn and grinned, for his speech about "Give me liberty or give me death" was the longest and the loudest, besides Pat made gestures and none of the other boys made gestures. I made my little last-day-of-school talk and tapped the bell for dismissal. Tom Tatters and his nine made a rush for the play-ground, the other scholars gathered up their books, though most of the books had been taken home at noon. A few of the mothers came to tell me how much they had enjoyed the exercises; how well pleased they were with the way the children had learned, and that they hoped the school board would employ me for another year. Soon I was alone in the deserted schoolroom. School was out. I dropped down in the teacher's chair to rest. The term's work had been a hard one. I had carried the burden of work on one shoulder and the burden of worry on the other, as so many teachers do, and now, though school was out, I still felt like one of the dwarfs in Longfellow's poem.

"Who, as northern legends say,
On their shoulders held the sky."

I looked up at the cob-webby ceiling, then down at the dusty floor, which only added to my weariness. The pictures of Lincoln and Washington hanging on opposite sides of the wall looked wearily at each other, then wearily looked at me. I glanced over the empty seats, then down at the huge coal box in the middle of the room. In it lay a backless, well worn school book. I stepped down and

picked it up. It was, or had been, a grammar. Through the grime of coal dust I read "Tom Tatters his book." Farther over in the blank space below "Suggestions to Teachers" was a rude but quite accurate drawing of a steam engine. Scattered through it in different hand writing were such rhyming couplets as,

"If you wish to talk in a proper manner,
You must do your best to learn your grammar."

Perhaps I should have said in the beginning that this all happened nearly a quarter of a century ago while I was teaching at the village of ———, east of Decatur, Illinois, on the Wabash railroad.

Tom Tatters could never learn grammar very well, but he is now a railroad engineer and drives the locomotive of the fast mail between Burlington and Omaha at an average rate of seventy-five miles in sixty minutes.

While I was looking through Tom's grammar, Mike, the janitor, came in. "And what will ye be afther doin' now, Masther B.," said he. "Well, Mike," said I, "I am going to rest the first thing I do." "And roight well ye nade it, Masther B.," said he. "Oi think Oi sh'll lock up now and let the shwapin' go till next wake." "All right, Mike," said I, as I put on my hat and started slowly away from the schoolhouse toward the postoffice. The post-master handed me a letter bearing the postmark R——, Nebraska. I opened it and read a cheery letter from my old friend and college-mate, Harvey H., who two years before had gone west and located on a homestead and tree claim in southern Nebraska. The part that interested me most read as follows: "I want you to

come out and see me. Come prepared to stay a month or two. It will do you good to get away from your musty, dusty schoolroom, to breathe the pure, clean air of this splendid new country; to inhale the fragrance of wild flowers if you like it or to 'chase the antelope over the plain,' if you like that, or, to be less poetical, to shoot at jack rabbits and prairie dogs, for they are very plentiful and they seem to enjoy being shot at. I want you to experience the appetite of a ranchman and to satisfy it with a ranchman's grub; to sleep in a dug-out or in a hammock under a 'plaza canopy' and learn again the meaning of 'Nature's sweet restorer, balmy sleep.' Write me when to meet you at Kearney, our nearest railroad point and only fifty miles away."

An early morning ten days later found me perched with the driver high up in front of an old-time stage coach, drawn by four fractious mules, grinding through the sand hills southward from old Fort Kearney. I had written my friend but through a misunderstanding he had failed to meet me. At noon we stopped at Walker's ranch on the divide between the Platte and the Republican, and at that time the only settlement between the two rivers. I was extremely thirsty when we reached the ranch; in fact, I felt a parching of my tongue and throat, caused from breathing the alkaline air, which was more than thirst. There were five passengers inside the coach and they had consumed the jug of water with which we started. The driver had offered me something to drink from a flat bottle which he had in his pocket, but I thought alkali was bad enough, so I thanked him and refused, at which he thought I must be a preacher, and he began to apologize for his outrageous swearing at the mules. My friend's

prediction, too, about my appetite began to prove itself, for to be frank I felt a hunger that I had not experienced since I was a boy and had been a fishing. Water, pure, sweet and clear, forced up by a wind pump from a well two hundred feet deep soon satisfied my thirst, and though I paid for only one dinner at the ranch I think I ought to have paid for two.

TROUBLE WITH AN INDIAN.

One of the five passengers was an Indian. I recall a little incident which I think well illustrates Indian character. At one place the road led across a deep, bridgeless ravine. The coach rattled down the steep bank and dropped to the bottom of the ravine with a chug. The driver shouted "everybody get out and push." All obeyed except the Indian. No coaxing or scolding could budge him. With much pushing, scrambling, whipping and cursing the passengers and the mules got the coach out of the ravine and on level ground again, but the Indian sat immovable and unconcerned amidst it all. Some of the passengers tried to shame him, others swore at him, but his swarthy cheek did not change color, his cold, snake-like eyes did not change their luster. I must confess, after it was all over I admired the fellow's dogged stoicism, though it was exasperating at the time. Everybody hates a shirk, but hate does not express the feeling of being compelled to tug a shirk up hill. Had not the driver and I interposed, I think he would have been dumped into the ravine and left there.

I found my friend Harvey, his sister and two brothers living, or burrowing, half underground exactly in the center of a magnificent section of land. Each had filed on

one-fourth of it as a homestead, and each fulfilled the letter of the law as to residing upon his claim, while at the same time they all lived together. Adjoining they had filed upon another section under what was known as the timber culture act.

The dwelling place was large and roomy, partly dug out from the side of a hill and having several apartments. Immediately in front was a small open court, or what the Mexicans call a plaza, probably twenty feet square. This was covered with bush-wood and prairie grass to furnish shade from the blistering sun. At one end of the court was the sod-house kitchen. A few rods down the ravine was a never failing spring of delicious water. A garden full of vegetables, an old dug-out filled with ice the preceding winter, the milk from half a dozen cows, and a large chicken yard filled with broilers furnished the luxuries and the necessities of life.

Many vacations have become dim to memory, but the one I am describing remains bright. The perfect freedom from care, the restful peace and stillness of the surroundings, the open-hearted hospitality of my friends, all contributed to make it a perfect vacation. Many rides over the prairies, many excursions and trips and visits with hardy, homespun neighbors, furnished all the recreation needed. Books, papers and magazines were all left behind.

As we sat in the little court one evening enjoying the twilight breeze and the shine of the full moon, Harvey remarked that we had not yet had an antelope chase and proposed that we go the next morning over to the flats in search of that remaining sport.

At five o'clock the following morning breakfast was

served and three ponies were saddled for the flats. The morning was one of June's best when "If ever come perfect days." I wonder why none of the poets have ever written a poem about "sunrise on the prairies." Surely diamond dew drops by the million, singing birds, weeping verdure, a world of freshly sprinkled flowers burdening the air with perfume, Mother Nature and Father God counseling together about us, their children; some of us bad, wayward and hard to manage, some of us good, obedient and tractable, but most of us a mixture of both. Surely all this and a score of kindred thoughts inspired by such a scene and such a morning ought to furnish poetry enough for a poem.

MURDER FOR SPORT.

As we rode along we talked about the undeveloped resources of this wonderful country. We saw in imagination the future railroads and towns, the orchards and schoolhouses; we spoke of the generosity of Uncle Sam who, "rich enough to give us all a farm," had offered to any man or woman of courage and grit a half section of land for only five years' loyalty to the soil and for planting out and cultivating a few acres of trees. The vandalism of the early pioneer settlers did not escape our notice, for here as we pass through a strip of timber on the right and left are immense black walnut stumps where majestic trees had been cut down and split up into rails for making cattle yards and pig pens, and sawed into rough boards for making box houses and sheds. Think of it! Clear walnut lumber, worth a few years later sixty to seventy-five dollars per thousand feet, and now so scarce and so valuable that it is no longer quoted in the markets.

Worse than all else was the wholesale havoc of so-called sportsmen—wealthy men from the cities, statesmen, ministers, learned professors and philanthropists—who had sojourned here for a time and enjoyed themselves murdering buffaloes. Everywhere all over the prairies lay the blanched skulls and skeletons of these once noble yeomen of the plains murdered by thousands just for fun.

But here are the flats and yonder a mile away is a herd of antelopes. We turn and gallop toward the right so that the wind will blow from them toward us and not the other way. Now we take our red bandanas, wrap them around a bushy rosin weed and holding them aloft march in single file, not toward, but as if we would pass by the herd. One would think that the bandana banners would frighten the antelopes, but they do not. Something of this sort is a ruse of all antelope hunters. It seems to arouse their curiosity and permits one to get very near to them. There were six antelopes in the herd, a male, at least we judged so from his lordly dictatorial manner, and two females with three little kids or fawns.

We had with us neither dog nor gun, if I may except a pocket revolver, which is of little use in hunting antelopes. As my pony followed the others, now stopping and now moving slowly along, I was free to watch the antics of the antelopes. I think my eyes did not leave them for a full half hour. They would face us, then bound high into the air like rubber balls and seem to poise themselves almost as soap bubbles do, and then drop to the ground with feathery lightness. The male especially was an expert at this. Then they would run a few rods and stop to repeat for us the gymnastics. The little fawns would cuddle close to their mothers, who would lick them

fondly and nose them out of our sight as much as possible. When they started to run away a waving of our banners was sure to bring them to a standstill and to a repetition of their antelope trapeze performance.

But we are now within two hundred yards of them—as close, perhaps, as we shall be able to get. We single out one of the fawns and lay our plans to run it down. This will take the wind of three horses. Alfred will take first heat, Harvey the second and I the third. But how can this be done? Will not the herd be miles away when the first runner must stop? No, for as soon as the herd is scattered and the race is fairly on the antelope will run round in a circle, or nearly so.

CHASING THE ANTELOPE.

"Keep your eye on the fawn selected," was the word. The first run was the merest play for the antelopes. They bounded away like flying birds, then stopped to gambol and frisk about. Soon the male tossed his head majestically high up in the air and left the dams with their fawns and made good his escape. Then the others separated, and the mother and fawn we had singled out were flying before Harvey on the second round. I watched the race from my station on the ridge and began to feel an excitement I cannot describe. Now they are out of sight in a valley, now following a ridge, now coursing down a ravine. Evidently the mother could run twice as fast, but she is pacing her fawn; now they are coming this way, they pass within fifty yards of my station, Harvey waves his hat and it is now my turn. I give the pony the rein and away he goes, jumping gopher hills and hummocks, keeping the inside track and cutting across when

the antelopes make a turn—this he does without any guidance from me, for I had dropped the bridle rein and was holding with both hands to the pommel of the saddle. My pony (I take no credit to myself) was gaining on the antelopes, the little fawn is nearly exhausted, but see, the mother has stepped into a gopher hole and crippled herself; see how lame she is; she leaves the fawn and limps away. Shall I not capture her first? It can be easily done and it will be so nice to have the mother to nurse and care for the fawn. Just then I remembered the watchword, "keep your eye on the fawn selected." It was well I did so, for the mother's lameness was only a ruse, just as you may have seen a meadow lark half flying with make-believe broken wing, and sprawling about to entice you away from her nest. The fawn turns sharply to the left, leaps a ravine with a bound, and starts up the hill in front of me. While I am clambering down into and up out of the ravine it has gained the top of the ridge quite a distance ahead of me. I gallop to the top of the ridge and look, but no antelope is to be seen. I look sharply over the swell of prairie, but only the shimmering sunlight, the waving sea of grass and flowers and the dancing of the "lazy Lawrence" meet my eye. I gather up the reins and assume a horseman-like attitude as Harvey and Alfred ride up. "Where is he?" "Where did you see him last?" "Which way did he go?" and similar questions were hurled at me, but I felt as we all do when we have been foiled, and answered accordingly. We went back to the ravine and located the point at which the antelope had crossed the ridge and where I last saw him, then returned to the ridge. "Now," said Harvey, "if he had gone straight he would have gone toward that

clump of cactus yonder, but he did not do that, he bounded toward the right or left a few rods and lay down." We hobbled our horses and began a diligent search. An hour of searching brought us to the conclusion that again instinct had triumphed over intelligence, and we must acknowledge ourselves outwitted—but stop! what is that? Not ten feet away, hidden in a clump of tawny colored grass, precisely its own color lay the little fairy of the plains. "Dead, perhaps," said I. Harvey smiled and shook his head, saying to me, "you can walk up to it and pick it up if you wish, it will not try to get away." I could not trust Harvey nor myself to believe this, so I cautiously crawled up and when conveniently near I grabbed it by the legs. I need not have done so, for it did not struggle or even bleat, but, as I held it in my arms, it looked into my face with its large, lustrous, pleading eyes in such a way that I pitied it sorely and loved it dearly.

Being but a few miles from Walker's ranch we went there to quench our famishing thirst, to rest and feed our horses and ourselves. A number of freighters, ranchmen and cow-boys were taking their nooning at the ranch and all had something to say about the antelope. A gentleman and his wife from Vermont who had been spending the summer at the ranch and were ready to return home offered me ten dollars for it but I doubt if I would have taken fifty. I wrote to my baby girl and told her all about the antelope and what a nice pet and playmate it would be for her. I got some milk and tried by various devices to get it to take some food but I could not succeed. An old frontiersman told me that I could not keep it. He said cow's milk was not rich enough for it, and that it

would soon die in confinement, but I tried to think otherwise. I made a cage of an empty cracker box and negotiated with the driver of the mail hack to take my pet down to R —— where I found it on my arrival. I tried again to feed the little captive but it seemed disgusted with me and all my efforts at kindness.

Now, I have great faith in talking to animals. I have talked my buggy nag out of a great many foolish notions and unbecoming actions. I have talked to moles, bats, rats and mice, polecats and most other "varmints," to birds without number, and I always speak to a dog when I meet one. You may not believe it but I have talked all the kick out of my cow's foot. So I took the little kid in my arms, stroked its soft satin-like coat and talked to it soothingly. "I will take you to Illinois," said I "and put you in a nice little park, give you a pretty name, call you Gazelle perhaps or something prettier, feed you the nicest choicest food, my little girl will be your companion and play with you, people will come to see you and admire and pet you." "Of course," I continued, "you will not live the wild, free life of the wild antelope, neither will you have to endure the hardships of cold and hunger such as your brothers and sisters and all your relatives will have to endure when

'Their dinner and their bed are snow,
And supper they have not.'

"Of course you will never see your mother again, but you will forget her and she will soon forget you." I fancied I could see tears in its eyes as I made this last remark. Then I put it in the chicken yard, made it a nice bed and bade it good night.

We sat again in the rustic plaza enjoying the cool, restful twilight and moonlight. "I heard you talking to that little antelope," said Phyllis, the maiden sister of my friend, "do you think animals can understand what you say to them?" "Yes, I do," I replied. "I have had some convincing experience with animals that proves to me that they understand what is said to them. Let me give you one instance:

SCRAWNIE'S PRESENTIMENT.

"A short time ago there came to my house a stray cat. It had evidently had a hard time in the struggle for cat existence. It was poor and lank, of a dingy yellow color, though nature intended it to be white, it had been too near the fire somewhere and one side was badly singed, besides it had been worried by dogs and stoned by boys until it was an object of pity indeed. It scratched at the back door and begged timidly for something to eat. Through pity wife and children took it in and cared for it, for which it seemed very grateful. It was so forlorn and unattractive that the children named it Scrawnie, probably the only name it ever had. It appeared meek and grateful for awhile, but soon it began to put on airs and to claim a sort of ownership in the premises. It would leave a nice plate of scraps and saucer of milk any time when it fancied it was not watched and jump up on to the table in search of something more toothsome. It would climb to the top shelf of the pantry and scratch a hole in the center of a pie to see what was inside of it, besides it made several attempts to catch the canary bird. In fact, Scrawnie was a born thief and a lawless cat. He would steal apparently for the mere pleasure of stealing.

I must say, however, that like every bad boy, he had one redeeming trait of character. He would allow the baby to carry him around by the neck, to slap him, bite him, pinch his ears and twist his tail, and would never attempt to bite or scratch in retaliation. I threatened more than once to kill him or drive him away, but wife and children would plead for him and I would release him, they signing a verbal bond for his future good behavior. At last one evening wife said in a tone of exasperation and despair, 'I believe if you want to kill Scrawnie you may. I cannot endure him any longer.' The immediate cause was that he had commenced to breakfast, lunch and dine on a brood of young Plymouth Rock chicks, hatched from eggs that cost a dollar a dozen. So I said, 'Kitty, Kitty, come here, Scrawnie.' He came rather reluctantly. I took him up, held him by his forelegs, looked straight into his eyes and said, 'Scrawnie, tomorrow morning you must die. Yes, tomorrow morning I shall tie a strong cord around your neck, tie the end of the cord to a strong stick and plunge you into a pail of water and your feline existence will be ended.' As I said this the cat-like green in his eyes changed to a pallid purple and he began to struggle to get away. 'Why not kill him tonight?" asked his wife. 'Because,' said I, 'you and the children would sign a weeping petition for his reprieve. I shall execute him tomorrow morning while they and you are asleep.' The next morning I prepared my garrote and filled an empty candy bucket with water, then I called Scrawnie, but he did not come. I looked for him, but could not find him. Baby called, 'Crawny, Crawny,' at intervals all day and for several days, but he did not answer. We never saw him afterward."

"That reminds me of my pet coyote," said Phyllis. "Not a pet coyote!" said I, but Robert interrupted by saying, "Yes, Phyllis has a regular menagerie here in the winter time. All the rabbits, owls, quails and prairie dogs in the country make this their headquarters. She feeds them right here in the plaza, and it makes quite a hole in the corn crib to do it, too." "That is all right," said Phyllis, "if Uncle Sam gives us the soil and the Lord furnishes the sunshine and rain for the corn it is no more than justice that the animals and birds should have their share. They are so much company, too, during the dreary winter days, besides they are the best friends we have if we were not too blind to see it. I should consider it robbery not to feed them, and selfish not to cultivate their acquaintance."

A FUGITIVE COYOTE.

"But how was it about the coyote?" said I. Then Phyllis related the following bit of experience with a coyote: "It happened the first winter we were here. One evening about sunset while I was busy working in the kitchen I heard a great noise and racket of barking dogs and a whining and screeching of some animal in distress. I opened the door and in ran a wild coyote, the dogs were determined to follow but I shut the door and kept them back. The coyote, trembling with fear and wheezing for breath, ran under the table and into the corner of the room glaring at me with his blood-shot eyes. I spoke to him kindly, telling him he was safe and that he might remain there during the night and I would see that he got safely away the next morning. I think he must have understood me for he crouched down and quit glaring at

me. The dogs were not willing to give him up, they kept howling round the kitchen all night and tried to dig under the wall but the ground was hard frozen and they could not dig. The next morning the coyote was still crouching in the corner. After breakfast I fed him. I gave him half a chicken and about a pound of raw meat. He ate it all and left the plate in much better condition than some children do after a meal. When I went to get the plate I stooped down, spoke kindly to him and patted his head and rubbed his dirty shaggy coat. You would think he would have snapped my finger but he did not." "Did he lick your hand?" asked Harvey tauntingly. "No, but I think he would if I had dipped it in chicken gravy first. I said to him 'you poor miserable tramp of the prairie, hunted by dogs, hated by men, dreaded by all the bird kingdom and spurned by all other animals, I am sorry for you, come and see me again when you are hungry or in distress, and please do not disturb my chicken yard. All the neighbors say they cannot succeed in raising chickens because of the coyotes. Use your influence with your tribe to prevent them from attacking my chickens. That is all I ask in return for what I have done for you.' Then I opened the door and told him he might go. When he was sure there were no dogs about he trotted slowly away, turning round every few rods to look back at me. When he reached the top of the ridge he sat on his haunches looking this way for a long time, finally he disappeared. I think I may truthfully say as William Penn said of his Quaker blood and the Indians, that not a drop of Phyllis' chicken blood was ever shed by a coyote."

"Nice stories," said Harvey, "and how beautiful they blend with the feeling one has on such June nights as this

—a feeling that makes us akin to all animated nature. I have usually regarded such things as belonging to superstition but I must confess that whether animals can understand what we say to them or not, they do respond to the tone of voice we use in speaking to them." "Why do you doubt that they can understand our words?" said I. "Well," continued Harvey, "you may call a dog a villain and threaten him with instant death in a soft soothing tone and he will come up to you wagging his tail and expressing gladness with every muscle of his body; on the other hand if you call him a nice doggy and tell him you have a bone for him in a harsh, scolding tone he will slink away like a culprit." "Any child would act in the same way," said I, "which only proves that always and everywhere it is the tone of voice more than the words used which conveys meaning." "I think, too," said Harvey, "much depends upon the person who does the talking. Some people have great influence over the brute creation, others have none at all. Now, I cannot go within a rod of a snake but it gets ready to bite me, while Alfred can play with snakes as if they were kittens. I cannot look at a setting hen without her ruffling her feathers and flying at me, but you cannot coax or scare one to peck at Phyllis."

The conversation now drifted to the practice of capturing and caging animals and birds. Several incidents were related to show how most animals and birds pine away and die when imprisoned, so deeply is the love of freedom implanted in the nature of all God's creatures. I did not have any story to tell for I kept thinking of my pet antelope. The more I thought about it the more I wished it was with its mother. The clock struck ten; it was now a full hour past the usual bed time and though

the light of the full moon, the all-inspiring blinking stars, and the evening breeze of the plaza were alluring; we retired for the night, but contrary to my usual habit I was not sleepy. The events of the day kept repeating themselves in my mind. The words of the old settler at the ranch about the impossibility of taming and keeping antelopes alive kept saying themselves over and over. Why did I not believe what he said and set the little captive free? How glad it would have been to see its mother if I had taken it back to the flats. The clock struck eleven. I thought of the grinning buffalo skeletons scattered all over the prairie. It almost made my blood boil to think of the heartless cruel way in which the proud, noble animals had been slaughtered, and that too not to satisfy hunger, not to serve any of the wants of man, but, as the Armenians murdered the Christians, or the Spaniards the Cubans, merely for sport.

Then I saw again the submissive look which the antelope gave me when I caught it. I saw also its resigned, heart-broken gaze as I told it all about its prospective home in Illinois, in what I called a park, but what it would call a prison. But I must go to sleep. So I said my prayers over again and resolved to quit thinking and go to sleep. The clock struck twelve. "Poor little Gazelle," thought I, "how I wish you were with your mamma, cuddling close to her, free and happy, instead of in the chicken pen, hungry, lonely and sad. What shall I do?" I guess it was my better self, or the "other fellow" in me, as Dr. Holmes calls it; or—I know not what—that told me I must go back to the flats the next morning and return the little antelope to its wild, prairie home and the care of its mother. I felt sure I could find the exact place where it

tried to hide in the dry grass, and I felt sure its mother had been there bleating for it. She would find it if I should take it back. Yes, that is what I shall do. I began to feel sleepy. "I will get up now and go and tell the baby antelope just what I intend to do." So I slipped out of my couch near the wide open window in one corner of the dug-out, partially dressed myself, climbed through the window and went out to the chicken yard. There it lay, the dear little innocent, not on the soft bed of straw that I had made for it, but several feet away on the bare ground—dead. I think it died of a broken heart.

FOURTH OF JULY ON THE FRONTIER

A ROLLICKING STORY OF ACTUAL EXPERIENCE AND OBSERVATION.

Early in the spring of 1880 my brother was appointed station agent at Lindholm, North Dakota, a newly established town on an extension of the Northern Pacific Railroad.

At the close of my term of school in June, with twofold gratitude I accepted a railroad pass and an invitation from him to make a visit to that new and at that time almost out-of-the-world part of our dear old Uncle Sam's domain. It was the latter part of June when I reached Lindholm. Aside from the newness of everything, apparently everything begun and nothing finished, Lindholm had the appearance of a thriving village. Immigrants were coming in on every train, household goods were piled up in the little freight house and on either side of the track outside, and prairie schooners could be seen going in every direction across the unbroken prairie.

The day after my arrival John Philson came rushing into the depot and said to my brother, "Mr. Butler, it will never do to let the Fourth of July go by without a celebration. We owe it to ourselves and to these foreigners coming in here. We owe it to our country, and besides"

—glancing at me and lowering his voice—"this county seat fight is on and those fellows down at Bobtown"—I could not hear the rest.

John Philson claimed to be the original first settler at Lindholm. He claimed that the town ought to have been named Philson and would have been, had not some land speculators who never saw the place named it Lindholm and put it on the map that way to induce the Swedish immigrants to buy land and settle there. Mr. Philson was a busy man, taking interest and stock in all the enterprises of the new town, but absorbed in business as he was he always found time to devote to patriotism and politics.

"Meet my brother from Illinois, Mr. Philson," said the agent. "He is a school teacher, and"— "Good," said Mr. Philson as he shook my hand. "I reckon you can read the Declaration of Independence, can't you? How are you on music? Can you make a speech?" I shook Mr. Philson's hand, or tried to, while he held on to mine and gave it three vise-like squeezes as he spoke the words declaration, music and speech. I assured him that I was in hearty sympathy with his ideas of celebrating the Fourth and would gladly do anything I could to assist.

A meeting was called of all the citizens of Lindholm to be held at the depot that evening. It seemed to me that everybody in the village came to the meeting. The women and children occupied the waiting room and platform, while the men occupied the boxes and bundles of household goods scattered round and about. John Philson appointed himself temporary and permanent chairman. My brother was elected secretary. The chairman stated the object of the meeting in a speech which glowed with enthusiasm and burned with patriotism, but which showed

a rather bad mixup of history. On one point, however, he was clear. He had been down to Robertson the day before and found the people of that aspiring little burg all alive and aglow over their prospect for obtaining the county seat. They were to have a free dinner and were sending bills all over the county with a big eagle and a flag in its mouth pictured on them, and saying that "the orator of the day was to be the far-famed Major Farnham, of Bismarck, who fought his country's battles at Bunker Hill or Lundy's Lane, or may be Gettysburg, I dunno."

Here the speaker stopped to take breath and to wipe the perspiration from his face. "They even had the audacious effrontery to give me some of the bills to tack up here in Lindholm. I tell you, friends and neighbors," continued the speaker, "we must all work shoulder to shoulder to win in this county seat fight. I want a rising vote on this right now. All stand up," ordered the chairman as he struck his left palm a heavy blow with his right fist. "Thank you. I knew we had the right stuff in us. You see we are the geographical center and the natural center of population and wealth and we are destined to be the railroad center of North Dakota. What we want and must have is the county seat, and an opening wedge to it must be a rousing Fourth of July celebration. We must get right to work. This is Wednesday and a week from Friday is the Fourth."

Remarks were made by others and committees were appointed. I do not remember all the names but the committees ran about as follows: Committee on grounds, Philson, Brown and Wells; on speaker, Philson, Wells and Brown; on barbecue, Wells, Brown and Philson; on flag, Mr. Finch (druggist and postmaster); on music, Mr.

and Mrs. Butler; sub-committees, the wives of all the other members of committees; chief marshal of the day, John Philson. After an hour of sociability, during which I was introduced to about everybody in town, the meeting adjourned.

The chief topic of conversation in the village during the following week was the coming celebration. Mr. Philson went up to Bismarck and had spread-eagle posters printed announcing the celebration. "Fourth of July, Lindholm and Barbecue" were printed in red letters. The bills stated that a talented orator had been secured and that a portion of the address would be given in the Swedish language, but the name of the orator was not given. Smaller bills were printed, some in English, some in Swedish and some in German. These the committee distributed to every part of the county, not neglecting the rival town of Robertson.

Another thing Mr. Philson did when he was in Bismarck was to make inquiry concerning Major Farnham, who was to speak at Robertson. He learned that Major Farnham was a veteran of the Civil war and was proud of his record. He learned further, that the Major was a lawyer by profession, a real estate agent, a politician, and was aspiring to a seat in the legislature in the new State of North Dakota.

Robertson was eight or ten miles southeast from Lindholm. It was somewhat larger than Lindholm, having been settled first. So sure were its citizens of its becoming the county seat of the new county that they had already donated a plat of ground for a courthouse site. The citizens of Robertson had planned to do a good deal of talking at the celebration on the Fourth in the interest of

Robertson. There would be no other celebration in the county, as they thought, and most of the settlers would be in Robertson on that day. They did not forget to send a cordial invitation to the citizens of Lindholm to come down and join them in the celebration. They smiled complacently and winked at each other skeptically when they heard that Lindholm was preparing to celebrate the Fourth.

OLD GLORY.

The evening before the Fourth, Mr. Finch reported to the manager and chief marshal that he had been unable to procure a flag. He had written to three places and found all the flags and bunting sold or loaned for the day. "We must have a flag," said John Philson. "No Fourth without a flag." "Say, Mary," he said to his wife a few minutes later, "haven't you some red stuff and some white stuff and some blue stuff around here somewhere?" "Why, John, what do you want with red, and blue and white stuff and how much do you want?" said his wife, looking at him quizically. "Make a flag," said John. "I trusted Finch to get a flag for tomorrow and he comes up now the last minute and says he can't get one, and I said by the eternal we must have a flag if I have to make it.' Say, Mary, come get in the buggy with me and we will go round and call on all the women in town and get all the red, white and blue stuff there is—there is a little at the store but not nearly enough."

So suiting the action to the word and the word to the action, Mr. and Mrs. Philson, aided by the women of the town who ransacked rag bags and attics for the purpose, collected material for a flag. A sewing bee on the plat-

form in the shade of the depot that evening resulted in a flag. It was a queer looking flag. It was composed of at least three shades of red, as many of blue and the white was not all white, but when at the top of the pole made by nailing two pieces of scantling together it was unfurled to the breeze at sunrise on the morning of the Fourth of July, it was "old glory" all the same.

Mr. Markey, the blacksmith, a veteran of the Civil War, brought his anvils, converted them into a battery and fired a salute under the flag—one round for each star on the flag, an extra round for North Dakota, and two for Lindholm.

THE ORATOR OF THE DAY.

The celebration proper was to begin at ten o'clock immediately after the arrival of the train which was to bring the speaker. Mr. Philson had taken an early train and gone up the road a few stations to meet the speaker. Boarding the return train and walking through the coach, Mr. Philson had no difficulty in identifying Major Farnham. The Major had been pointed out to Mr. Philson on the occasion of his visit to Bismarck, though the latter had avoided an introduction.

The Major was seated near the end of the coach, reading *The Bismarck Review*. He was a tall, somewhat angular appearing gentleman, aged about fifty-five or sixty. His coat was a swallow-tail and gave evidence of long and faithful service. He wore a white vest, a very high standing collar and a white cravat. The most noticeable thing about the Major was his hat, a white beaver, the nap of which was worn off in spots, the rest being calmly smoothed down with a wet brush.

"Major Farnham, I believe," said Mr. Philson as he offered his hand. "Yes," said the Major, looking up from his paper. "My name is Philson, I am one of the committee. I had a little business up this way this morning and ran up on the early train. I am glad nothing has prevented your coming, Major." "O, you reside at Robertson, then," said the Major. "We are expecting a big time down there today, made big preparations, and we know you will do your part. Well, I am glad to meet you," said Mr. Philson as he seated himself beside the Major. "How are things up at Bismarck and how are legislature prospects pointing by this time?" Mr. Philson had touched an interesting topic and he and the Major were soon engaged in earnest conversation. A little station or two was passed and the train was nearing Lindholm. "Excuse me just a moment," said Mr. Philson, "I want to speak to the conductor." "Say, Tom," said Mr. Philson to the conductor, "are there any passengers for Lindholm except me and that man I was talking to?" "No, I believe not," said the official, shaking his head. "Well, say, Tom, don't call the name of the station then, at Lindholm. I'll explain the next time I see you. Have a cigar," said Mr. Philson with a wink, suiting the action to the wink. "Well, here we are, Major," said Mr. Philson as the train stopped at Lindholm. "Why, is this Robertson?" said the Major. "I declare, I was busy talking. I might have been carried by had it not been for you."

The Major was heartily greeted by the committee, Mr. Philson introducing him and keeping near him to ward off any leading questions that the Major might ask concerning the town. The boys were shooting firecrackers, the horses of the country people were neighing, the band,

which consisted of a fife, a cornet, a big bass and a tenor drum, was playing.

After washing his face, brushing his coat and adjusting his necktie at the little new hotel, the Major was ready for his part of the program. The grounds selected were the to-be-in-the-future streets of the city, now covered with wild prairie grass. Seats composed of boxes, crates, bales of shingles with boards laid across them, had been put in place, but many of the company brought for their own comfort camp stools, chairs and rockers. The speaker's stand consisted of Mr. Philson's heavy wagon surmounted by an awning above which floated the improvised flag of many colors. The band played, the singers sang, the only minister in the town offered prayer and I read the Declaration of Independence. I think many present must have thought it was original with me as I afterward received many compliments for my *speech*.

Mr. Philson, with a flourish of words and jumping-jack of gestures, introduced the speaker, the silver-tongued, far famed, talented and patriotic Major Bismarck, of Farnham. "Glorious flag," "glorious country" and "glorious day" were weighty thoughts in the chairman's speech, but the weightiest thought was the county seat. He urged all citizens present to do their duty and vote for Lind—"I mean the city whose guests you are today," said the speaker. In the excitement of this climax to his speech and amid cheers, especially from the wagon where the committee were seated, Mr. Philson sat down,—sat down on the Major's hat. Renewed applause and laughter from the boys followed this anti-climax to Mr. Philson's speech of introduction. The Major seemed distressed at the condition of his hat, but Mr. Philson did all he could in the

way of straightening it up, smoothing it down and apologizing to the Major.

THE SPEECH.

The Major had prepared a good speech and had rehearsed it many times. His Mayflower introduction was too long, but his recitation of Mrs. Heman's poem, "The Landing of the Pilgrims," called forth applause. His imitation of the ringing of the old Independence bell was rather ludicrous, and when he attempted to sing a verse of the "Star Spangled Banner" his voice deserted him on "the rocket's red glare" and he had to cough, clear his throat and talk the balance of the chorus. He eulogized the flag. "Its crimson bars, red as the blood of '76 that was shed at Bunker Hill. Its ethereal white,—white as angelic robes. Its rainbow blue,—blue as the milky baldric of the skies." As he said this he pointed upward and shook his trembling finger at the crazy-quilt flag which was hanging limp above him. He had finished his "word to the rising generation" about their "glorious opportunities and keeping inviolable the tenets of the constitution" and the "martyrdom of their grandfathers" and was about to sit down, when Mr. Philson reached forward and giving the Major's coat tail a jerk said, "Don't forget the county seat, Major." "And now, finally," said the Major, "a word to you, my fellow-countrymen. Solomon says, 'charity begins at home.' I say patriotism begins at the same place. I understand you are soon to exercise that God-given right, the ballot, in voting for a county seat." (Cheers.) "I know you will do your duty." (Continued cheers and yes, yes, from the wagon.) "I am told there is a little flag station up the road, where a few

Swedes get their mail once a week,—and let me say right here, I claim that America is for Americans. (Feeble applause.) I am told that this little burg, called Lindburg, I believe, this little way station, where nothing is put off the cars except stock fish, lingen berries and bad whisky—in the night,—I am told that it aspires to be the county seat. (Dead silence.) But fellow-citizens of Robertson, when the ballots are counted on the evening of the tenth of August it will be found that not Limberger, or whatever it is, will be the county seat of this glorious county, but this beautiful little city of Robertson will be the county seat of this glorious county. Again, I thank you for your profound attention."

At this moment John Philson arose and proposed three cheers for Major Bismarck. He gave the *hip, hip* and the first hurrah all by himself. Not even the committee in the wagon joined in, not that they had deserted their leader, but they were doubled up with laughter and chagrin and could not respond. Many remarks were made about the Major's speech, but few except Mr. Philson and the committee congratulated him. Mrs. Farmer Jones probably expressed the general feeling when she said: "He made a good speech, but he was just like a cow we once owned. She would give a fine bucket of milk and then kick it over at the very last." The Swedes nearly all went home mad, refusing to remain for the barbecue.

THE BARBECUE.

It had been given out that a fine dinner would be served at noon consisting of roast beef and mutton. The committee having this part of the program in charge had erected a shade by setting timbers in the ground and

forming a sort of scaffold much longer than wide, covering it with grass and weeds. On either side a rude table was erected with a passage-way between. A trench was dug a few yards away and partly filled with whatever fuel could be picked up about the village, such as old boxes, barrels and railroad ties. This was saturated with coal oil and set on fire. After it had been reduced to a bed of coals the "whole ox" donated by Mr. Philson and the few sheep donated by other parties were roasted or rather burned. The carcasses were cut into pieces and laid on bars of iron which spanned the ditch. Mr. Markey said that was the way the boys used to do in the army.

The bad boys about the village, headed by Billy Kimber, were very officious about the trench. The chief cook accused them of punching some of the pieces of meat off the iron bars into the ditch. This the boys denied. He tried to drive them away, but found this a difficult thing to do. He finally gave them a dime to go away and stay until dinner was ready. They accepted the offer, went to Finch's and bought a nickel's worth of powder and a bunch of firecrackers and started out to have some fun. They went down by the livery barn, where they saw Mr. Philson's goat, Billie, standing upon the straw stack. They persuaded Billie to come down and two of the boys petted him and fed him oats while Billy Kimber tied the bunch of firecrackers to his stump of a tail. As soon as the firecrackers were lighted Billie became frantic and ran as fast as he could toward the barbecue stand. The boys followed, shouting and laughing. In his frenzy Billie ran right into the ditch and jumping up and down, bleating piteously, he ran from one end of the trench to the other, knocking most of the meat down into the fire. When

Billie came out he was a sight to behold. His hair and whiskers were all burned off and his feet were burned to a crisp. "I wonder who did it," said Billy Kimber as he and the boys came up. "First we saw of him we saw him coming from toward the depot. We saw some fellows over by the depot. I expect they did it."

As an act of mercy the chief cook cut Billie's throat and put him out of his misery. Two of the men dressed him and cut him up and put the pieces on the roasting irons with the rest of the meat which they had gotten out of the ditch—much of it ruined, for it had caught fire as soon as it fell into the coals which Billie had stirred up. Naturally enough, Billie's fate became a joke among the barbecue committee. They planned to have Mr. Philson, his owner, eat a slice of him for dinner and then tell Mr. Philson what had happened. I never heard how this part of the program came out.

The barbecue as a feature of the celebration was not a success. The people crowded around the tables and the committee did the best they could to serve them from the passage between, but most of the meat was covered with dirt and ashes, burned on the outside and raw inside. Some of the economic wives of the company selected choice pieces, intending to take them home, clean and re-cook them, but most of the meat was wasted.

THE BALLOON ASCENSION.

"I'll tell you what boys," said Billy Kimber along in the afternoon when it began to be rather quiet and tame for the Fourth of July, "we ought to have a balloon sension. I know how to make one and how to send her up. I saw

them do it at Smithville, where we used to live. You just fill her up with smoke and let her go. I would not want to go up in her, though. I saw a fellow fall out of one once. Gee whiz! he came down fast. At first he came feet downward and then he turned over, made a great hole in the ground where he lit. I saw it." The other boys were delighted with the idea and they soon had all the plans completed and all the material provided except the balloon. "My mother emptied a feather tick the other day," said Tommy Clark; "how would that do?" "Just the thing," said Billy Kimber; "where is it? It won't hurt it any."

Half an hour later the boys were down by the barbecue stand, everybody else having left, and had placed a headless and bottomless barrel over the trench and started a fire under it. The empty feather tick had been secured and sewn up except a hole in one corner. This corner was placed inside the barrel. Cords were tied to the other corners of the tick and three boys were holding it in place. Jimmy Jenkins was holding the basket and the cat that was to be a passenger in the balloon. Billy Kimber was bossing the job. The process of inflation was slow. "Let her go" finally shouted Billy at the top of his voice. The balloon ascended a yard or two, then careened to one side, toppled over and fell down into the trench. In a second it was all ablaze. "That is rocky," said Billy Kimber, "but it would not have happened if,"—and here he blamed some of the boys for not obeying orders.

Tommy's mother did not learn for some time what became of her feather tick. Finally Tommy confessed, placing the blame on Billy Kimber and the other boys. He was required, however, to empty his savings bank and pay

for the tick. It took all the money he had, about two dollars, but it taught him a wholesome lesson.

THE FIREWORKS.

"Say, kids," said Billy Kimber as the bad boys of the town were loitering around the depot after the evening train had passed, "I know how to make a skyrocket. You just take a stick and fasten a lot of paper or shavings or something to one end, then you fasten the other end into a tube or something and put some powder in the tube and touch her off." The result of this talk found the boys back again at the barbecue stand just at twilight on the evening of that eventful day.

Billy had his stick, his tissue paper, his tube,—a small empty baking powder can,—and his powder. The boys all gathered round and watched Billy while he made the rocket. Billy in the meantime entertained the boys with what happened one Fourth of July at Smithville. "Now she is ready, boys," said Billy. "This little hole is the fuse, clear the track and I will touch her off." Billy touched a lighted match to the little wisp of paper that he called the fuse. It began to burn and he stepped back. After waiting a reasonable time, Billy stepped up to it and then got down close to the fuse to see if it had gone out, when "Shwish, bang" went the powder end of the rocket. Billy fell over on the ground with a scream and a groan. The other boys were terribly frightened, for they thought Billy had been killed. One of them ran to his home to tell his father (his mother was not living). The news that Billy Kimber had been killed spread rapidly through the village. "Killed by the cars," said one. "Drowned in the railroad reservoir," said another.

"Kicked by a horse," explained another. "Always knew he would meet an untimely end." "Poor boy, he had no mother to care for him, no wonder he was bad." "Yes, Billy was bad, but a good-hearted boy." Such were the remarks. Some started for the reservoir, some for the depot and some for the livery barn, but Billy's father hurried to the barbecue stand, where he found his son with his face blackened and terribly burned with powder. He was able to walk home. The doctor was called and Billy's face, except a little place for breathing, was wrapped in cotton saturated with linseed oil and something else. It was thought for a time that he would lose his eyesight, but he finally recovered a wiser, if not a better boy.

THE FOURTH AT ROBERTSON.

The committee, the band and a crowd of happy citizens had assembled at the depot in Robertson to meet the "orator of the day, Major Farnham." The committee were much perplexed and disappointed when he did not get off the train. They described him to the conductor. The conductor looked thoughtful as if trying to remember and said, "Yes, such a man got on at Bismarck and had a ticket for Robertson, I am quite sure." As he said this he waved a signal at the engineer. The train started and the conductor stepped aboard. The brakeman heard the conversation and replied, "Yes, the old rooster got off at Lindholm." As he said this his hand caught the iron railing of the moving coach, his foot caught the step and the train sped away. The committee telegraphed at once to Lindholm making inquiry for Major Farnham, of Bismarck. Half an hour later a return message read, "No

such person here. Do not know him." The committee were in a quandry. "Surely the Major will telegraph us," said the chairman. "Don't fool yourself," said the knowing man of the committee. "Those Lindholm rascals have bribed the old coon to speak for them and to leave us in the lurch." An explanation was made to the crowd surrounding the grand stand, that by mistake the orator had gotten off the train at Lindholm. That he would, undoubtedly, as soon as he discovered the mistake, procure a team and come as soon as possible to Robertson. The audience would be treated to some music, a fine free dinner would be served at noon and the oration by Major Farnham would be given in the afternoon. They were advised to assemble at the grand stand at twelve o'clock when, without doubt, the Major would be present and they would have the pleasure of greeting him and of hearing from him the announcement of the exact hour for the speaking.

Twelve o'clock came, and one, and two, but Major Farnham did not come. It happened that a company of young people who had celebrated the first half of the day in Lindholm, concluded to drive to Robertson and celebrate the remainder of the day there. From these the committee at Robertson learned much of what had been going on at Lindholm. They had heard the Major's speech and remembered much of it—especially his county seat peroration. It then dawned upon the committee as a whole that the Lindholm crowd had outwitted them. "I told you," said the knowing member, "Yes, they have either stolen or bribed our orator and they expect to make capital out of it in the county seat fight." Some of the committee were in favor of laughing it off as a joke.

Others declared they would get even. But the chairman of the committee, a spirited gentleman from Kentucky, felt highly insulted and swore immediate vengeance. He persuaded three of the committee to go with him. They went to the livery barn and procuring a team and carriage, they started at once for Lindholm, taking their revolvers with them.

THE MAJOR PUZZLED.

After dinner, seated on the veranda of the little new hotel, the Major removed his cigar from his lips and remarked, "That was certainly a very fine audience I had today. They were very appreciative, too, but I cannot understand one thing. It puzzles me." "What was that?" said Mr. Philson flushing slightly and grinning. "Why," said the Major with a frown, "I cannot understand why they froze me so at the very last, on that reference to the county seat. I have thought since that I must have made some mistake, got the names of the town mixed up, it may be." Philson looked at the other two members of the committee who had dined with him and the Major. They looked at him. Then, laughing, he said, "Well, Major, the fun is about over now, and we might as well make a clean breast of it. You have been duped. You have spoken in Lindholm today. You see we are in a fight with those Bobtown fellows on the county seat, we are bound to win and so—" The Major threw his cigar into the street, brought his hand down upon his knee and said, "My God, what will my wife say? What will my friends say?" Then he got up and walked up and down the veranda, puffing as he did so and wiping the perspiration from his face.

When Philson could get the Major to listen he continued: "You know, Major, that strategy is fair in war and politics. We are bound to win in this county seat fight, and I think today's work has already won the fight for us. Now, sit down, Major. The thing is done and what I propose is this: We meant no harm to you. They were to pay you ten dollars and your expenses. We propose to double it. Here is a twenty dollar bill. Your expenses down here from Bismarck were four dollars and something, here is another ten. Now, you cannot say we have not treated you royally as far as money is concerned. Now, what I propose is this. We will get a rig and send you down to Robertson. You can get there by three o'clock, meet the fellows, make the same speech you made here, the crowd is there yet waiting for you, you can get your ten dollars from them and return to Bismarck on the evening train." The Major shook his head and replied, "I am afraid and ashamed to go to Robertson. I am ashamed and a-a-ashamed to go to Bismarck."

A few minutes later Major Farnham was seated in a comfortable carriage behind a pair of spirited horses, with a driver, a member of the committee and myself. Mr. Philson was not one of the four. He was marshal of the day, he said, and he thought it his duty to remain in Lindholm.

About half way between the two towns, on the but little traveled prairie road two carriages met. Each carriage contained four men. An animated conversation took place. It was much more animated from the carriage going north than from the carriage going south. Some of the language used would not look well in print. No eloquence or persuasion on the part of the Major, not even

his tears, could convince the other party that he was innocent. "No, sir," said the leading speaker, "we want no speech from you in Robertson. If you come to Robertson today, sir, or any other day, you will be egged out of town, sir. As for that contemptible villain of a Philson, if he wants to keep his neck away from hemp, he wants to keep away from Robertson." "Now, sir," addressing the driver, "turn round and go back and don't fool about it." The driver did as he was ordered.

COMPENSATION.

"No," said the Major to Mr. Philson as they waited at the depot for the evening train, "what I deplore more than anything else is the effect it may have upon my political prospects." As the train whistled the Major looked haggard and forlorn. His mashed and battered beaver did not add anything favorable to his appearance. A minute later, as Mr. Philson grasped his hand, he said: "If I can do anything for you, Major, at any time, politically or in any other way, do not hesitate to call on me. Good-bye."

The county seat fight waxed warm and continued warm until the day of election. A thorough canvass was made of the entire county by representatives from both towns. When the ballots were counted it was found that Robertson had won by fifty-two votes. Thus, in one instance at least, trickery and strategy in politics did not win. Ten years later a second vote was taken and Lindholm won by three hundred votes. Lindholm is now and will doubtless continue to be the county seat.

About fifteen years after the events of this eventful

Fourth of July, as Mr. Philson was seated in the bank at Lindholm, of which he is president, a rather seedy, dejected old man came into the bank and asked permission to post some lithographs in the window. Mr. Philson recognized the caller at once as his patriotic friend of a former day, Major Farnham. Each grasped the hand of the other warmly. "It ruined me politically," said the Major. "I had bright prospects for the legislature and for congress but that Fourth of July affair made of me a laughing stock wherever I went. I have paid out money enough for cigars to offset that joke to buy a good farm. And now the best I can do to earn a living is to travel as advance agent for a cheap show." Mr. Philson said: "It has been just the opposite with me. I have had more fun out of that affair than anything I ever did. Still, as I look back at it now, I regret that it happened. We lost the county seat by it, for a good many of the Swedes got mad at what you said that day, not understanding very well what you did say, and voted for Robertson against their own interests. But we have the county seat now and we are happy."

Mr. Philson entertained the Major for the night at his elegant home. As they parted the next day Mr. Philson went to the vault, took out his private box and took from it an envelope, saying as he handed it to the Major, "Major, I am sorry that I wronged you. I have lived long enough to learn that trickery does not pay either in the long run or the short run, and yet it is a part of my nature. I never was happier in my life than when I stole the Fourth of July orator from Bobtown, poor old Bobtown." As he said this he laughed heartily.

"That envelope contains one hundred shares of stock

in a California gold mine—did not cost me much—may not be worth much, but much or little, it is yours. Nominally the stock is worth ten thousand dollars."

The last I heard of Major Farnham he was living comfortably in a snug little home of his own in Bismarck purchased by the sale of the shares in the gold mine.

AUNT POLLY

A THANKSGIVING STORY.

Everybody called her Aunt Polly—everybody except Tom Sullivan and some more mean boys about like Tom. They called her "Old Granny Pop." She had no nieces nor nephews and yet she was everybody's aunt. She lived in the outer edge of town, just beyond the end of the sidewalk on the way to the fair grounds. Her house was small, containing only one good room and a small back shed or summer kitchen. The front yard was full of flowers in the summer time. Morning-glory vines ran all over the front porch; hollyhocks and sunflowers formed a sort of picket line between the front yard and the garden. Aunt Polly was a great gardener. She always had vegetables to sell before anybody else. This was because she planted them when the moon was right. She saved her own garden seeds, and when the neighbor women would call to see her in the early spring time she would get down her bag of seeds and untie each little package of radish, lettuce, beet, and cabbage seeds, together with the early beans, the late beans, the kidney beans, the six weeks beans, and all the rest. After telling how, when, and where she got each variety, and just how, in what sign of the moon, how far apart, etc., to plant each, she would divide, not appearing to heed the neighborly admonition "not to rob herself."

In one corner of the garden next to the old, many-

times patched and propped-up high board fence stood a large pear tree; in the other corner stood a fine sweet apple tree, while between were several peach trees. The latter never bore any fruit, but the apple tree and the pear tree were loaded each autumn with fine fruit. She sold most of these to the neighbors for preserving, using herself in the same way the knottiest and wormiest of the lot. She kept a few, however, of the finest and best and when her little nieces and nephews called to see her she would get one, cut it into four pieces and give each a quarter—a luscious taste and smell that never failed to tantalize the appetite for more.

Aunt Polly kept a few hens and she managed and cared for them so well that she always had eggs to sell about Thanksgiving and Christmas time when eggs were scarce and the price was high.

Though everybody thought Aunt Polly lived alone there were really three in her family, for she had a little brown, curly dog named Snap, and a large, white cat with pink ears named Snip. Snip was usually a good stay-at-home cat, though once in a while he would stray away to some coal bin or dirty barn in search of mice and would come home with the pink ribbon around his neck soiled and ruined and his white fur so dirty and bedraggled that nobody except Aunt Polly would have known him; then Aunt Polly would scold and get a pan of warm water and some soap and scrub him up, while he would make all sorts of cat promises never to do so anymore. Snap was a good little dog, but he was very much afraid of boys and of other dogs. He did not associate with other dogs very much and they did not like him because he had a fine bushy tail that curled up over his back in a proud

sort of way, and because he wore a collar, which gave him an air of superiority over other dogs. When Aunt Polly went anywhere she limped and walked with a cane. She said the limping was caused by rheumatiz, though some people said she did not limp all the time; it was only when she thought of her rheumatiz that she limped.

Snap always went with her and he knew enough to keep close to her, for when the other dogs got a chance they would jump onto him, roll him over in the dirt, bite his bushy tail, and try to pull off his collar.

One Fourth of July there was a celebration on the fair ground. Aunt Polly had been called to a neighbor's to see a sick child, for people always sent for Aunt Polly when anybody got sick. It was a big day, there were a great many dogs and people in town and Aunt Polly was afraid Snap might get into trouble so she left him at home. Tom Sullivan, Joe Green, and some more boys saw Aunt Polly leaving home without Snap and thought now was their chance to have some fun; so they coaxed Snap to follow them off. They petted him, called him a nice doggy, and allowed him to smell and taste just a little now and then a fresh bone which they got at the meat shop. In this way they enticed him down back of the fair ground, where they tied a bunch of firecrackers to his tail and set them off. Poor Snap went howling and running toward home as fast as he could go. Occasionally he would stop and spin round and round in the vain attempt to free himself from the firecrackers by biting them off, then on he would go again, a great crowd of boys following him, laughing and shouting. A dozen dogs or more were also after him, but they were evidently afraid to touch him; they only barked as loud and as fast as they

could. Snap ran right through the procession, terrifying the women and children so much that one woman upset her baby carriage trying to get out of his way; another beat him with her parasol while he was spinning round. Men laughed, and women screamed, and children cried. Poor Snap reached home just as Aunt Polly returned. He ran into the house and began spinning round in the middle of the room. Snip, who had been taking a nap on the rug, jumped upon the bed and climbed to the top of the old-fashioned bedpost, which terminated in a ball about the size of a croquet ball, where he perched himself in perfect safety. The fusilade of firecrackers was about done by this time, but Aunt Polly caught Snap's rail between her broom and the rocking chair and swept the rest of the crackers off. Snap ran under the bed and stood in the farthest corner panting and trembling, and it was a long time before Aunt Polly could induce him to come out. The old lady shook her broom at the crowd of boys that had congregated at the gate and gave them a "piece of her mind" for "treating a poor, harmless dog in such a wicked, cruel manner, abusing and scaring to death a poor old crippled woman's helpless, orphanless dog." Her voice trembled with rage as she threatened them with the "police, the jail, the gallows, and the *bad place*." Tom Sullivan proposed "three cheers for Granny Pop and the Fourth of July."

For a long time after this Snap could not be induced to leave home, even in company with Aunt Polly; he seemed to have lost faith in her cane to protect him. Snip was his only associate. They ate together from the same dish and slept together on the same rug, they played together under the apple tree and the pear tree and ran

races round and round the house; but a noise like a fire cracker or a crowd of boys, or a lady with a parasol, would send them scampering into the house, Snap taking refuge under the bed and Snip climbing to his retreat at the top of the bedpost.

Aunt Polly earned a few dollars a month taking care of the sick; besides she was a famous knitter of stockings and mittens. It was something marvelous to see her fingers fly and hear her knitting needles click. So, with her nursing, her gardening, her hens, and her knitting, she managed to earn a living for herself and family. Sometimes the meal was scanty and after Aunt Polly had finished Snap and Snip had to munch and scrape bones and lick the platter a long time before their appetites were satisfied.

The summer before the Thanksgiving that I want to tell my little friends about had been unusually dry, and although Aunt Polly watered her cucumber vines regularly, and sprinkled them with soot in the dark of the moon, they did not do well and she had very few to sell and none to pickle for her own use or to carry to a sick neighbor regardless of the doctor's admonition. Her grapes nearly all mildewed and what few survived were stolen by the birds and the boys. Nothing in her garden seemed to do well except her flowers. She had a bed of lovely pansies and her pinks were indeed perfection.

The old lady's meager income was further reduced by the invention of knitting machines, which could knit a hundred pairs of stockings while she could knit one. As a consequence people found they could buy stockings cheaper than they could buy the yarn to knit them. It seemed, too, that people did not get sick any more, or if

they did instead of giving Aunt Polly money for her services they only thanked her or gave her a half-worn garment or a cast off pair of shoes or something of that sort. Besides all this her hens stopped laying just as the price of eggs began to rise in the fall.

Miss Carnation, one of the teachers in the public schools, while taking a walk one evening early in September stopped to admire the flowers. "Won't you come in and rest," said Aunt Polly, who was sitting on the porch in her rocking chair, with Snip in her lap and Snap lying at her feet. "Thank you; I will stop a few minutes," said Miss C. At sight of her parasol Snap began to tremble and whine and ran to his place of refuge under the bed, while Snip skipped to the top of the bedpost. The performance was so unusual that Miss Carnation noticed it and spoke about it. This led to a full account by Aunt Polly of the Fourth of July episode, ending with the remark "that Tom Sullivan will end his days in the penitentiary or on the gallows if I am any judge of human nater." "I know Tom is bad, but I hope he is not that bad," said Miss C. "I have him in my room at school, but so far he has not given me any trouble. His former teacher told me that he was the plague of her life; that she used to lie awake at night wondering how she could manage him. She went to see his parents about him, but they said they could do nothing with him. She had several interviews with the principal of the school about him, but that gentleman only smiled diplomatically and said: 'Do the best you can, Miss Worry; Tom is a hard case, but his father is a member of the school board and we must be judicious in our management of him, though it would be a blessing to the school and to the community if you

would break his neck.'" "But Tom seems to like me," continued Miss C. "I expect to manage him, and if I find I cannot I shall—. I was just admiring your flowers. I think your pansies, your pinks, and your phlox are perfectly lovely. Why don't you fix up a choice assortment of them and send them to the fair next week? I see they offer a generous premium for the best exhibit of cut flowers."

"Lawsy," said Aunt Polly, "I couldn't get no premium on flowers. If my name was Dunlap or Stevenson or Seiberts you might talk."

"Do you really think so?" said Miss C. "Well, I admit there is a good deal in a name, but after all I think there is more in merit. I'll tell you what I will do; if you will furnish the flowers I will furnish the name of the exhibitor and we will try it."

Aunt Polly got her scissors and cane and limped out to the flower bed and cut a beautiful bouquet for Miss Carnation, who thanked her three times over and walked away.

"Thomas, may I speak to you a moment?" said Miss Carnation, the next Monday afternoon at the close of school. Tom came slowly to the desk, swallowing, looking guilty, and wondering what mischief he had been caught at. Miss C. smiled pleasantly and said: "I am preparing some flowers to exhibit at the fair and if you will kindly assist me I will procure a ticket of admission for you on Thursday—that is to be our day, you know." Tom grinned and gave a sigh of relief. As a matter of fact, all the days belonged to Tom, and he usually gained admission to the fair by climbing over the fence or sneaking in some way. "I want some sand," continued Miss

C., "and I want some one to go with me to an old lady's residence down by the fair ground and help me gather some flowers." "If you want wild flowers, I know where there is scads of them," said Tom. "Some time," said Miss C., "I shall be pleased to go with you to gather wild flowers, but these are not wild ones; they belong to an old lady who lives—" "Old Granny Pop?" questioned Tom. "O, I'm not goin' there. She hates me worse than poison. She would take a fit if she saw me comin'." Miss C. suppressed a smile and said she would excuse him then from going to Aunt Polly's, but would like to have his assistance in other ways. The outcome of it was that Tom assisted Miss C. in other ways, entering heartily into her scheme, and nobody was happier than Tom when he saw the blue ribbon nestled among the pansies, pinks, and lilies of the floral design which he and Miss C. prepared, representing Faith, Hope, and Charity. Nobody was happier than Miss C., unless it was Tom, when the papers announced the award, "For the best exhibition of flowers, Miss L. Carnation and Thomas Sullivan, $10."

The next day when Miss C. called to see Aunt Polly and to tell her of the result, she found the old lady despondent. Somebody, she said, had made a raid upon her pear tree and her apple tree the night before and had stolen them nearly all. "I just know it was that Tom Sullivan and his gang," said the old lady, "and how I am to live through the winter is more than I can tell. It costs me nearly a dollar a week the best I can do. The pears and apples were my main dependence and now Tom Sullivan—" "I think you are mistaken, Aunt Polly," interrupted Miss C. "You know it was the closing day of the fair and there were a great many rough people in

town. I am sure it was some of them who robbed you. I am sure that Tom is innocent."

When Miss C. handed Aunt Polly the crisp ten dollar bill the old lady folded it in her shriveled and wrinkled fingers and looked into Miss C.'s face with tears of gratitude in her eyes, remarking, "That will last me and my family till Thanksgivin'."

The latter part of November Miss C. gave her pupils a little talk about Thanksgiving Day. She told them how Governor Bradford and the Puritans thanked the Lord for the clams and many other incidents in history. She also told them how her pupils in a former school each brought in a small contribution of something—such as a few vegetables, a few pounds of flour, a little money, etc., and how they relieved the distress of a poor family in the neighborhood, bought a pair of shoes for a little colored boy, and a cap and mittens for a little fellow whose father and mother were dead, and how they furnished books and clothing for two little girls, and closed by asking them if they would like to do something of that sort. They all said they would, Tom among the first. "You may mention it to your parents," said Miss C., "and we will talk about it again."

A few days before Thanksgiving Day Miss C. went to the superintendent's office and secured his rather unwilling consent to her scheme. He could offer no objection but was a little bit afraid that some of the patrons might think—he did not say what but ended with the word think. Miss C. made mimeograph copies of the following letter, which she gave to the children the next day:

Dear Parent:—The children in my room and I have been talking about a little plan for Thanksgiving. I have suggested

that each one who can do so bring to the school room on Wednesday afternoon a small donation of provisions of some kind or a little money if more convenient. The old lady known as Aunt Polly, who lives in the little house near the fair ground, has been unfortunate in her little ways of earning money and she is now in destitute circumstances. I have acquainted myself with the facts and know that she has had but ten dollars in the past eleven weeks. It is our purpose to give her whatever may be brought in. Only those who feel able and willing to contribute are asked to do so. No child will be compromised or questioned in any way if nothing is brought. Yours in the spirit of charity.

Lizzie Carnation, Teacher.

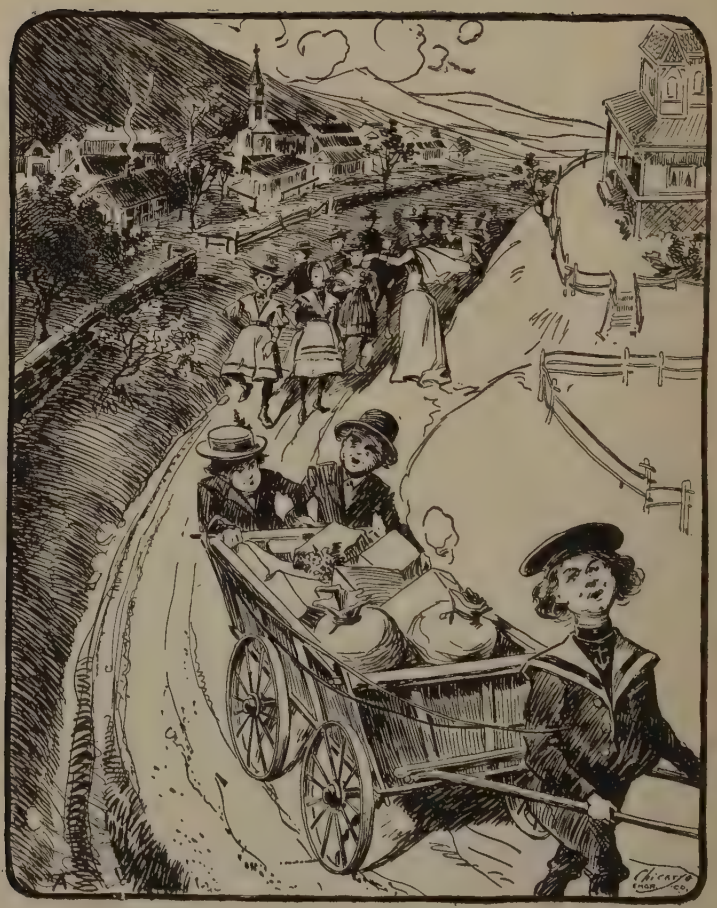
The letter had the desired effect. People knew just what would be done with the contributions and knew the worthiness of the old lady. As a result little packages of potatoes, beans, and other things were brought in. Mary Butcher, whose father has a meat market, brought an order for two dollars worth of meat; Bertha Bunn brought an order for a sack of flour; Willie Wilson, the banker's son, brought a check for five dollars; Mary Willing, the washerwoman's daughter, brought a little basketful of turnips; Robert Collyer brought an order for a load of coal. All brought something. Tom went to borrow a handcart to deliver the things with and on his way he met a traveling man who paid him a quarter to take his valises to the depot. This made Tom a little late, but he came in panting and placed the quarter on the teacher's desk.

Miss C. wrote on the blackboard a list of all that had been brought, with its estimated value. The children added it up and found the footing to be just $39. Miss C. contributed one dollar herself, making a total of forty dollars.

It was agreed that they should meet at the school house at 7 o'clock to take the things to Aunt Polly. Tom led the way with the loaded handcart. As they came up to the little low porch Aunt Polly evidently did not hear

them, for she could not hear very well. Snap, however, heard them and set up such a barking as only a dog can when he is excited and feels that something is about to happen. Tom and Miss C. stood near the old rickety front door. Miss C. lifted her hand toward the children and said sh—, and this is what they heard:

"O Lord, you know I am a poor old woman; I have always worked hard and done my best, but I have had bad luck lately. Somebody stole my pears and my cucumbers all—(Bow, wow, wow; bow, wow, wow). Snap, hush up; you must not bark while I am trying to pray. O Lord, I don't know what to do. I spent my last nickel for a soup bone today. I do not want to go to the poor house if I can help it. (Bow, wow, wow; bow, wow, wow; bow, wow, wow). Snap, I'll spank you if you don't hush; why, you never barked that way before when I was praying. What ails you? I expect the poor dog is hungry —but dear Lord, thy will be done. I will do my best—" (Bow, wow). The children could not contain themselves any longer, and they all began to laugh so heartily and so loudly that Aunt Polly heard them and came to the door. "Lord bless me," she said as she opened the door. "The Lord has sent me something to eat and sent a lot of his angels with it," exclaimed the old lady, as her eyes fell upon the loaded cart, Miss Carnation and the children. "And I see the devil helped to bring it, too," she exclaimed, as she glanced at Tom over her spectacles. "Thank the Lord; come in, come in." They all crowded into the little room and the open doorway, while Miss C. made a little presentation speech. Aunt Polly was overjoyed, and after crying a little while, she hobbled to her bureau, got three pears that she had carefully saved by wrapping them in



cotton, sliced them up and gave each child a dainty bite. Tom, in the meantime, aided by a piece of bologna sausage which he had in his pocket, had coaxed Snap from his fortress under the bed and Snip from his watchtower on the bedpost, and they were having a little Thanksgiving reunion of their own.

"Just one thing more, Aunt Polly," said Miss Carnation, "before we bid you good night. I found, as I expected, that Tom had nothing whatever to do with the stealing of your fruit, and you misjudge him when you call him a devil. What do you think, children?" "No, no," was the answer. "Tom used to be a bad boy, but he is now a good boy."

"Only a fellow must do something on the Fourth of July," said Tom.

"But the Fourth of July is not as good a day as Thanksgiving," said the children.

MAGICAL SPECTACLES

A CHRISTMAS STORY.

It was the night before Christmas, wife, daughter and the company folk had gone to the church to assist in the cantata and to receive a cornucopia of Sunday School confectionery. When a man is getting ready to celebrate his sixtieth Christmas he does not care as much for such things as he once did. He has not lost interest in them exactly but his interest is of that vicarious sort which prompts him to let others absorb the joy of the occasion while he enjoys the coziness of his own hearth tile.

From the glowing embers in the grate spirals of flame flickered lazily upward and disappeared. As I sat in my easy chair watching them, memories of childhood, youth, manhood and middle age attached themselves to the spirals of flame and flickered away. While musing thus of myths and memories a small package wrapped in asbestos came rattling down the chimney and bouncing from the edge of the grate rolled toward my feet. I picked it up, removed the wrapping and found in a costly case a pair of spectacles. They did not differ much from other spectacles except that the lenses were larger and were furnished with a sort of squinting attachment to change the focus. On the inside of the case in gilt letters were the words, "Magical Spectacles, and Merry Christmas." I have never been troubled with skeptical doubts about Santa Claus and so I credited the gift at once to "Good St. Nick."

I carefully adjusted the spectacles to my nose and glancing at the case again I read, "These spectacles are to enable you to read between lines, to discern between words and thoughts and to see yourself as others see you." "Eureka," thought I. "Let me try them on something or somebody." Turning to my reading table I picked up a letter from my nephew and namesake which I had received by evening mail. It was a brief letter thanking me for a book I had sent him for a Christmas present. At least so it read an hour before. As I re-read it through the magical spectacles I was amazed to read as supplementary to the above, "The book was a disappointment. I expected something of some value; a bicycle, a gun or a foot ball. *A book!* 'Advice to Boys,' *rats.* You old duffer, if I had the money you have and a handsome smart nephew like me, I would do something for him worth while." Below this was scribbled as a sort of P. S. or after thought, "Things are not even in this world. I paid out about seven dollars for Christmas presents. I have been counting up and all I got in the way of presents will not amount to three dollars."

I have a cabinet in which I keep various little trinkets, mementoes, souvenirs and among the rest a large number of Christmas presents. Magical thought, I will get my cabinet and read again with the aid of the magical glasses, some of the inscriptions and presentation speeches. As I opened my treasure box the first thing my eyes fell upon was an old mutilated McGuffey's second reader. I read on the fly leaf, written by the teacher, my name, "age eight years—careless, precocious, credulous, impertinent, bright, but will bear watching." "Well, well," thought I, "was that the teacher's inner thought of me? Why, she used

to pet and praise me, curl my hair with her bony fingers and tell my father what a model boy I was." As I fumbled the old book reflectively a faded, yellow thumbed paper fell from between its pages. I picked it up and read what I had read many times before, "Christmas 1858, From Mabel." Then I read magically, "I think you are the nicest boy in school. I love you. I will give you some maple sugar next week. I saw Tillie W. give you a bite of her apple yesterday. It made me ashamed. We have some big Romanites. I would bring you one every day, but I am afraid they would laugh at me." As I replaced the treasured scrap, I thought how much that sounds like my wife. I will have to ask her about it when she returns from the cantata.

Next, I brought my fountain pen under the focus of the magical lenses. It was once a thing of beauty, though hardly a joy forever, for I never could write with it. It was a present from one of the high school classes way back in the seventies, when I was more of a reformer than I am now—perhaps I ought to say more of an iconoclast. I recall I was greatly surprised to receive it, for I had discouraged as much as possible the giving of school presents; but the note accompanying the gift when read magically cleared up the mystery of a third of a century. "We did not intend to give you any present, you talked so mean about presents. We had already bought Miss A's present when you told us you did not believe in teachers accepting presents from scholars. So we thought if we gave Miss A her present and did not give you anything, you might think we did it for spite; so we send you this fountain pen. It is no good, but it is as good as you deserve."

The inscription on a gold headed cane from the boys

reads somewhat differently. "You are all right. You stood by us when the board of education wanted to cut out football, baseball, shinney and everything else except tag and poor pussy wants a corner. We have not been little angels in school, you have licked some of us pretty hard, but I guess we deserved it all right."

A little pen wiper made of three scraps of cloth of different colors, nearly circular in form, notched around the edge, held together and ornamented by a shoe button in the center. This is the handiwork and gift of a little girl, five years old. The naughty needle pierced one little finger and caused a drop of blood to impress itself upon the fabric, and a little tear drop fell beside it. Viewed magically one is now a tiny seal of gold and the other a tiny diamond. My cabinet contains no treasure more precious than this. Precious little donor. Nearly a score of winter's snows have whitened the little mound. "Yet Love will dream and Faith will trust that somehow, somewhere meet we must."

This fancy clock with its maximum of ornament, and its minimum of use that tries to say "cuckoo" when it strikes, was the parting gift of the board of education years ago. "A token of esteem for long and valued services" reads the dim and faded card. Magically viewed it reads, "Original cost two dollars, sold two years ago for five dollars, returned in a few days and exchanged for knives and forks; sold again last Christmas for six dollars, returned again and exchanged for silver spoons. Sold lastly to the school board for seven dollars, the seller being secretary of the board. Yeas, four; nays, three."

That fine leather couch over there in the corner of the room was the gift of a thousand children, purchased as I

am assured by the free will tender of pennies, nickels and dimes. As I look at it through the magical glasses a myriad of happy faces are reflected from it. The card reads, "To our friend and beloved ———." Magically it reads just the same.

The easy chair in which I am seated was the gift of half a hundred teachers, whose servant I was for a score of years. My magical lenses reflect their faces from the wall. A few of them are making faces at me, but most of them are smiling. I turn the magical focus again toward the grate. I see among the embers and the miniature vista beyond them a baby in a manger, flocks of sheep resting peacefully and shepherds gazing upward. I hear a chime of bells and a song of peace with a good will refrain. The scene becomes enchanting. I lean forward for a better view, the magical glasses slip from my nose and drop into the glowing grate. A host of cherubs are reflected by the glasses, while the bows and temple pieces twist themselves into letters which spell: MERRY CHRISTMAS.

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